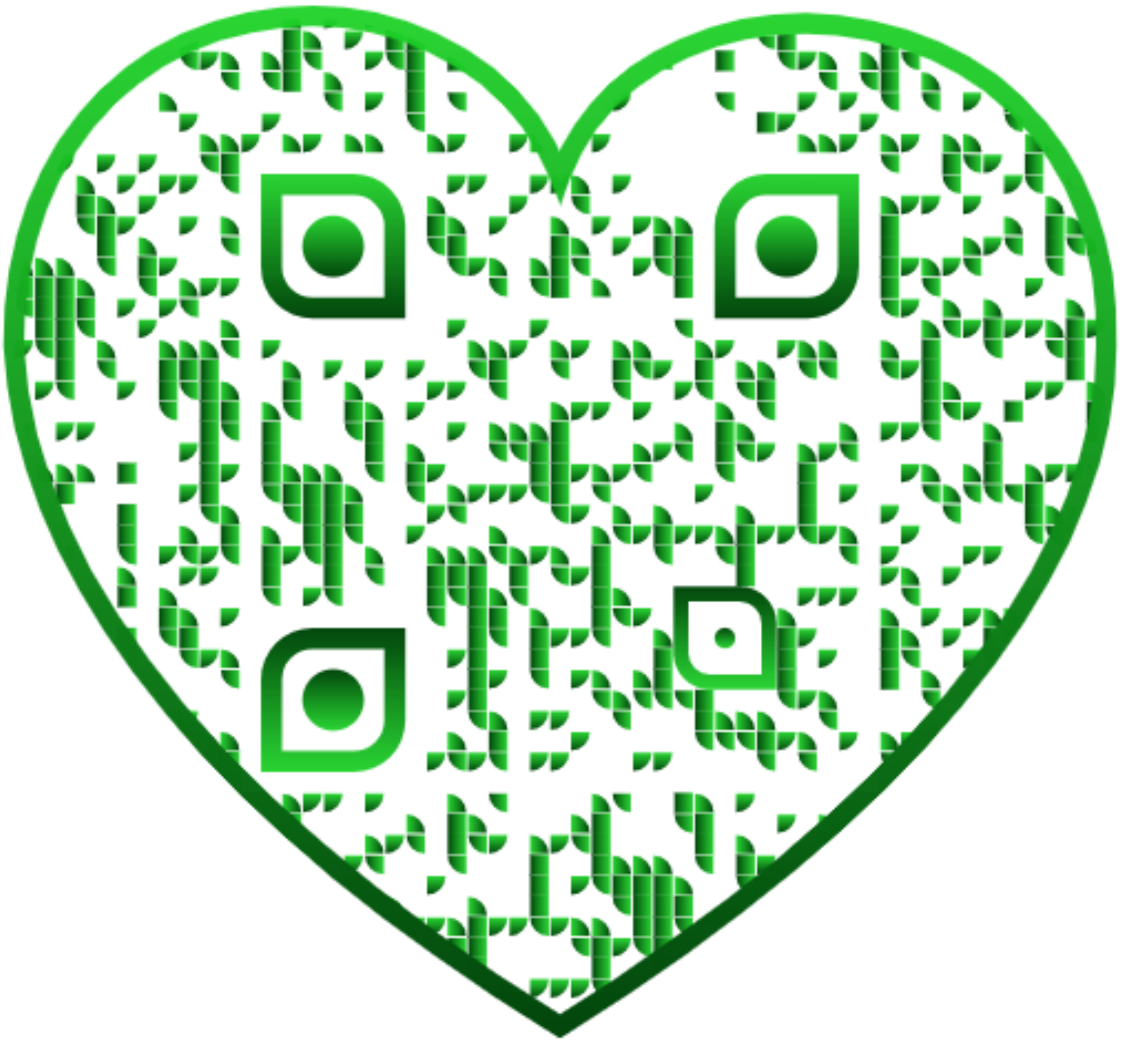
THE ROSICRUCIANS

The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order

Christopher McIntosh



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Foreword

In 1895, W. B. Yeats wrote an essay titled "The Body of the Father Christian Rosencrux," which begins by describing how the founder of Rosicrucianism was laid in a noble tomb, surrounded by inextinguishable lamps, where he lay for many generations, until he was discovered by chance by students of the same magical order. Having said this, Yeats goes on to attack modern criticism for entombing the imagination, proclaiming that "the ancients and the Elizabethans abandoned themselves to imagination as a woman abandons herself to love, and created beings who made the people of this world seem but shadows . . . "

On the whole, Yeats' use of the image of Christian Rosenkreuz seems irrelevant until the reader comes to this sentence: "I cannot get it out of my mind that this age of criticism is about to pass, and an age of imagination, of emotion, of moods, of revelation, about to come in its place; for certainly belief in a supersensual world is at hand. . . ." In this statement, Yeats shows his own deep understanding of the whole Rosicrucian phenomenon. *That* is what it was really about; that is the real explanation to reverberate down three-and-a-half centuries.

The "hoax" began—as Christopher McIntosh describes in these pages—with the publication, in 1614, of a pamphlet called *Fama Fraternitatis of the Meritorious Order of the Rosy Cross*, which purported to describe the life of the mystic-magician Christian Rosenkreuz, who lived to be 106, and whose body was carefully concealed in a mysterious tomb for the next 120 years. The author of the present book translates "fama" as "declaration," but my own Latin dictionary defines it as "common talk . . . a report, rumour, saying, tradition." So it would hardly be unfair to translate "fama" as myth or legend.

At all events, this mysterious pamphlet (which can be found printed in full as an appendix to *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* by Frances Yates)[1] goes on to invite all interested parties to join the Brotherhood, and tells them that they have only to make their interest known—either by word of mouth or in writing—and the Brotherhood will hear about it, and probably make contact. This is, in itself, a suggestion that the Brotherhood has magical powers—perhaps some crystal ball that will enable them to "tune in" to anyone who is genuinely interested.

Two more works followed the pamphlet—as Mr. McIntosh relates—and many people took the trouble to publish replies, indicating their eagerness to join the Brotherhood. No one, as far as

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[1] *Fama Fraternitatis of the Meritorious Order of the Rosy Cross*, reproduced in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 238.

anyone knows, ever heard from the Brotherhood. Yet the very idea of their existence caused tremendous excitement. This is what everybody had been waiting for—a kind of prophecy of a Second Coming: "Howbeit we know that after a time there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and human things, according to our desire . . . ."[2] "The land of heart's desire" was about to become a reality.

Christopher McIntosh suggests, very plausibly I think, that the first two pamphlets were probably a joint effort of a group of idealistic philosophers based in Tübingen, perhaps inspired by an early "novel" by one of their number, Johann Valentin Andreae. This "novel," *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, was published as the third "Rosicrucian" document in 1616.[3]

All of this raises interesting questions: Why did the Brotherhood ask for volunteers and recruits if they had no intention of replying? If the authors of these documents *were* idealistic, then what was the ultimate aim of the whole exercise?

The main clue to the answer, I believe, lies in a phrase in Johann Andreae's will, made in 1634, when he was 48. Andreae writes: "Though I now leave the Fraternity itself, I shall never leave the true Christian Fraternity, which beneath the Cross, smells of the rose, and is quite apart from the filth of this century." "The filth of this century"; "this filthy century"—either phrase might have been used by W. B. Yeats if his language had been a little more emphatic.

In his autobiography, Yeats says that Ruskin once remarked to his father that, as he made his daily way to the British Museum, he saw the faces around him becoming more and more corrupt. Untrue of course: people don't really change that much—or that fast. But Ruskin's words express the hunger of a man who feels that he lives in an age when no one really cares about the things that matter. T. S. Eliot expressed the same feeling in *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men*. The invention of Christian Rosenkreuz is, likewise, not so much a hoax as a cry of rejection and a demand for new ways: in short, a kind of prophecy.

It is worth noting that there are apparently two kinds of legend that seem to exercise great fascination over the minds of men. The first involves wickedness or horror—Faust, Frankenstein, Dracula, Sweeney Todd, even Jack the Ripper. The second involves, not so much goodness as greatness, superhumanity; and this can be found in legends of Hermes Trismegistos, King Arthur, Parsifal, and Merlin, as well as the modern *Superman* and *Batman* comic strips. In

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[2] *Fama Fraternitatis or a Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross*; see Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 239.

[3] *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz [Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz, Anno 1439]* (Strasburg, 1616). English translation by Ezechiel Foxcroft (London, 1890).

"Hellas," Shelley used the figure of an old Jew to portray this type—the Wandering Jew of the Bible—who lives "in a sea cavern amid the Demonesi," and who is a master of all wisdom.[4] Yeats later remarked that he joined the Theosophical Society because he wanted to believe in the real existence of the Old Jew "or his like."

For, of course, both the "magical" organizations to which Yeats belonged—the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn—drew a leaf out of Pastor Andreae's book, and set out to build their organizations on a myth propagated as reality. Madame Blavatsky claimed to be in communication with Secret Masters in Tibet. And the story behind the Golden Dawn was at least as circumstantial as the account of the life of Rosenkreuz. In 1885, according to this story, a clergyman named Woodford was rummaging through the books in a secondhand stall in Farringdon Road when he came across a manuscript written in cipher; a friend, Dr. William Wynn Westcott, identified the cipher as one invented by a 15th-century alchemist, Trithemius. It proved to contain five magical rituals for introducing newcomers into a secret society. In the manuscript, there was also a letter which stated that anyone interested in the rituals should contact a certain Fräulein Sprengel in Stuttgart. It was Fräulein Sprengel, the representative of a German magical order, who gave Westcott permission to found the Golden Dawn.

The cipher manuscript may just possibly have existed (although it was not picked up in a bookstall in Farringdon Road). The letter about Fräulein Sprengel certainly did not, nor did that lady herself. Yet the story accomplished its effect, and the Golden Dawn grew into one of the most impressive magical organizations of the late 19th century. And—as Mr. McIntosh relates—the legend of Christian Rosenkreuz came to play a central part in its magical procedures.

A few decades ago, the Golden Dawn was held in very low esteem by literary scholars who had heard about it. I remember attending evening classes on Yeats soon after the War, and our teacher, Professor Philip Collins, remarking that he had expected to find Yeats' comments about magic and occultism completely preposterous, and was surprised to find that they had a reassuring ring of common sense. All the same, he took it entirely for granted that the Golden Dawn was a society created by charlatans and supported by the gullible. I daresay most professors of modern literature still take that view.

But there are now a great many students of the "paranormal," who are willing to acknowledge that, in some strange way, "magic" can produce extraordinary effects. Anyone who doubts this should

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[4] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Hellas" in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press. 1932), lines 163–164.

read Yeats' essay on magic where he describes in detail a magical operation conducted by MacGregor Mathers (another founder of the Golden Dawn) and his wife, in which Mathers was able to take control of Yeats' imagination and induce curious visions.[5]

It is important to recognize that "magic" usually involves the control of mental states rather than the production of physical effects upon matter—witches flying on broomsticks, etc.—although physical effects *can* be produced. The mental effects all take their starting point from telepathy, while the physical ones may be regarded as deliberately induced "poltergeist effects," in which objects are made to move by some curious power of the unconscious mind. (I have come increasingly to believe that the right half of the brain is involved here, and that the actual energy used is the same energy that causes a dowsing rod to twist in the hands of the water diviner—probably some form of Earth magnetism that can be channeled by the right cerebral hemisphere). It seems perfectly clear that Mathers had learned the trick of controling these generally unrecognized energies.

I agree that there appears, at first sight, to be little connection between this concept of "magic" and the history of Rosicrucianism, as explained in the following pages by Christopher McIntosh. Yet in the course of reading his book, I have come to feel the connection increasingly strongly. It began to crystallize when I read his account of Heraclitus of Ephesus (in chapter 1), who believed that the universe dies like a living organism, and leaves behind a seed from which a new universe originates. Everything in the cosmos derives from a basic substance, a kind of fire, and everything moves in a cyclical process.

Just before reading this, I had been writing an outline of a book on astronomy, and had been describing the Big Bang Theory of the universe. Heraclitus described this with some precision. According to the Big Bang Theory—for which the evidence is now overwhelming—the universe *did* begin (around ten billion years ago) as pure, undifferentiated "fire," from which the elements were to crystallize later. It will continue to expand for another few billion years, until its own gravity causes it to collapse again. It will eventually become a concentrated mass of matter, whose size will be far larger than the "critical mass" needed to create a Black Hole. But then, according to the latest astronomical theory, a Black Hole does not go on collapsing into itself indefinitely, but eventually explodes once more. If this is correct, then Heraclitus's scheme would be weirdly accurate. In fact, the only thing Heraclitus failed to grasp was that the new "seed" would be smaller than the previous one because so much energy would have been irrecoverably lost in the whole process.

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[5] W. B. Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903).

Now you may say that Heraclitus was only making an "informed guess" about the universe. But when a guess comes this close to reality, I personally begin to wonder whether it could not be something more than guesswork. That is, whether there is not some *other* way of knowing the universe, directly and intuitively. Mystics have always said so, and in his remarkable *Drug Taker's Notes*, R. H. Ward speaks of a "mystical" experience he had under dental anaesthetic. He says that after the first few inhalations, he passed "directly into a state of consciousness already far more complete than the fullest degree of ordinary waking consciousness." He repeats this point several times, speaking of how "consciousness *diminished*" again toward ordinary consciousness, and how "the darkness of what we flatter ourselves is consciousness closed in upon me" (i.e., as he was once more waking up).[6]

Even more interesting, however, is Ward's description of passing through what he calls "a region of ideas," where the insight was intellectual rather than emotional. He adds: "one knew not merely one thing here and another thing there. . . . one knew everything there is to know." Robert Graves has described a similar mystical experience in a story called *The Abominable Mr. Gunn* (he told me it was autobiographical), and here again it is clear that the sense of "knowing everything" is meant in a literal sense, as if we had some strange faculty that could reach out and acquire *any* piece of knowledge at will.

If there is anything in this theory, it may be that there *is* a tradition of knowledge that precedes the development of modern intellectual consciousness. This could explain why neolithic man went to the trouble of building vast stone computers like Stonehenge more than two millennia before the Chaldeans, who are usually given the credit for being the first astronomers, began to study the heavens.

At all events, it seems clear that the doctrines of Christian Rosenkreuz were based on those of the Gnostics, and on the notion which Christopher McIntosh has expressed so admirably by the analogy of man being "under water," with the region of knowledge and insight above the surface. T. S. Eliot said much the same thing in a chorus from his poem, "The Rock."

Fundamentally, then, I am not speaking about a hoax, or even about "wishful thinking," but about the most profound problem of the human race. Again, Ward comes excitingly close to putting his finger on it when he says that a part of him disliked his mother for "making him live two lives"—the natural instinctive life of a child, and the superimposed and artificial life of "the world." He goes on

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[6] This and the passage that follows come from R. H. Ward, *Drug Taker's Notes* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), pp. 26–28.

to say that, under LSD, it seemed to him that all children are ruined by adults through being conditioned to the life of this world so that they live two lives, one secretly, and one for adult approval. But then "ruin" is not inevitable.

For example, all my own books, from *The Outsider* onward, have been about precisely this subject: the "outsider's" rejection of "the world," his desire to turn inward to a world of truth that he feels resides in his own depths. So, plainly, I have not been entirely ruined. Ward himself remarks that he is surprised that he is not more wicked and madder than he is, considering his upbringing. Most of us do, in fact, survive, because that inner hunger is so intense.

This, I believe, explains why Rosicrucianism has continued to exert its grip on the Western mind. It is not because we are hopelessly gullible, or because we would like to believe in absurd fantasies. In a legend like that of Christian Rosenkreuz, we seem to catch a glimpse of what we *ought* to be, and what we *could* be. If we set about it with sufficient determination, the grip of "the world" can be broken—or at least, weakened until it ceases to induce a constant feeling of alienation. We are a planet of a double star, torn between two powerful gravitational forces. We have to learn to move inward without losing control over the external world and not, like Rimbaud, simply surrendering ourselves to an "ordered derangement of the senses."

I am not, of course, denying that much of the current interest in occultism has its root in "escapism" of the most ordinary kind; but I still believe that it is the *real* content of "occultism" that attracts powerful minds. Christopher McIntosh strikes me as an interesting illustration of this proposition. It is only necessary to glance at this book to see that his is a trained mind working within the academic tradition. His first book, *The Astrologers and their Creed* (1969), is basically a brilliant piece of research into the history of astrology.[7] In the very last chapter, "The Verdict on Astrology," McIntosh concedes that it cannot be defended scientifically; but he goes on to cite the researches of the Gauquelins into the actual statistics about people born under Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, etc., to show that there *does* now appear to be some solid scientific basis for believing that human temperament is influenced by the planets. You could say that the book is skeptical until the last two pages.

McIntosh's next work, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*[8] is again, quite simply, an excellent piece of biographical research—one of the few books on this important "magician" in English. At no

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[7] Christopher McIntosh, *The Astrologers and their Creed: An Historical Outline* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969).

[8] Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974; London: Rider, 1972).

point does he seem to give too much credit to Lévi's magical claims. He is interested in Lévi as a personality and as a thinker, but not really as a mage.

Before writing this foreword, I asked McIntosh to tell me how he became interested in the Rosicrucians. His reply was immensely interesting. He related that he had been interested in "occult" subjects since he was an undergraduate at Oxford in the early 1960s. He came across many references to the Rosicrucians, but A. E. Waite's enormous and turgid volume left him confused. Since he had always enjoyed writing things that gave him the opportunity of doing some detective work—especially when it involved reading in French and German—he settled down to studying the original sources. The book was started in 1972, the year *Lévi* came out.

During the course of writing the book, however, McIntosh's attitude toward his subject changed. "When I began it, I was going through a phase of rather dry, scholarly objectivity in my attitude to such subjects and I intended to examine Rosicrucianism simply as a rather curious historical phenomenon without really expecting to find that it contained a teaching of any real depth or coherence. Since then, not only has my attitude changed—I have become much more pro-occult—but I also found during my researches that Rosicrucianism goes deeper than I had realized, and does contain something valuable and coherent. So you could say that this book has been an important experience in my life. It has taught me that, sooner or later, anyone studying these subjects from an academic point of view has to make the decision whether they are going to take a personal stance for or against. To turn away from this decision and try to remain neutral is, to me, death."

McIntosh goes on to apologize for not having conveyed this sense of the real inner meaning of Rosicrucianism sufficiently. But having read his manuscript for the second time, I can reassure him. I have also read most of the major texts on the subject, so I am in a position to assure him that his own is far and away the best. And since it also happens to be an interesting and exciting story, it should at last secure for the mysterious Rosenkreuz the interest he deserves.

—Colin Wilson

INTRODUCTION

Half a century before the term "Rosicrucian" came into use, the 16th-century Provençal astrologer and soothsayer, Nostradamus, wrote:

> A new sect of Philosophers shall rise,
> Despising death, gold, honours and riches,
> They shall be near the mountains of Germany,
> They shall have abundance of others to support and follow them.[1]

In this quatrain, written in about 1555, Nostradamus seems to have made a strikingly accurate prediction of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood as described by its followers. Starting in Germany in the early part of the 17th century, this "new sect of philosophers" shunned worldly satisfactions in favor of spiritual ones and was said to have conquered death through the elixir of life. As the last line of the quatrain foretold, Rosicrucianism gained many supporters and eventually spread all over the world. Numerous off-shoots are still found today.

The word "Rosicrucian" has been in our vocabulary for a long time. Yet few words have been used in so many different senses and in such confusing ways. Rosicrucianism is sometimes referred to as being synonymous with one or another of the 20th-century occult groups. Sometimes it is invoked as a vague blanket term for anything to do with alchemy and the pursuit of Hermetic studies; sometimes it is talked about as though it were a specific doctrine like Marxism or Catholicism. To arrive at a clearer definition, you must step back and look at the movement in a wider perspective.

The complex of ideas known as Rosicrucianism may be seen as a loosely-knit organism clustered around a central mythology whose chief symbol is the extremely simple, yet marvelously suggestive, image of a rose linked to a cross. This "organism" first appeared in Germany under mysterious circumstances, and Germany remained the most important center of its development for about two centuries. Much of this study will therefore be concerned with German material.

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[1] *The Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus*, translated, edited and interpreted by Henry C. Roberts (New York: Nostradamus Inc., 1968). The French text reads:

> *Une nouvelle secte de Philosophes,*
> *Méprisant mort, or honneur & richesses,*
> *Des monts Germains seront fort limitrophes,*
> *A les ensuyure auront appuy & presses.*

The Rosicrucian myth came into being as no other myth has done. It was, so to speak, deliberately "launched" with great suddenness on its strange course through history. I became intrigued by the Rosicrucian phenomenon partly because of its unique qualities and partly because its origins have never been satisfactorily explained. Initially, I saw it as a straightforward detective mystery, the problem being to find out who created the Rosicrucian legend and why, and having done that, to trace its subsequent development. As I progressed in my study, however, my approach underwent a change.

I had originally thought of the Rosicrucian movement as a vague hotchpotch of ideas clinging to an extremely nebulous legend, containing very little depth of teaching or tradition, and surfacing at various times in history in a disconnected way. But during my researches, the evidence I discovered forced me to revise this view and led me to two unexpected conclusions. First, the movement had a much more continuous history in its early stages than I had supposed; second, it did develop a coherent teaching, which represented a highly interesting late revival of a Gnostic way of thinking. By "Gnostic" I mean, in essence, the view that the human spirit is trapped, as it were, under water, living a kind of half-life, ignorant of the fact that the sunlight and air of the true spirit are overhead. If knowledge (or *gnosis*) can make people aware of this, they will make the effort to swim upward and be reunited with their real element. I shall explain this doctrine and its development more fully in chapter 1 and in later chapters will show how it affected Rosicrucianism.

Apart from its Gnostic features, the Rosicrucian movement must be seen in terms of a wide variety of cultural and intellectual ingredients. In this study, I shall follow many paths and enter into many intriguing areas of symbology, my intention being to examine the history of the Rosicrucian phenomenon from its origins up to the 20th century. The story traces two parallel paths. One pursues the outward history of the successive Rosicrucian brotherhoods, their rites and practices, and the strange and sometimes fascinating characters who were involved in them. The other follows the inner development of Rosicrucianism and examines its intellectual and spiritual heritage and the doctrines that it taught its followers. I shall also look at the influence that Rosicrucianism had outside its immediate circle of practitioners, for example, in literature.

In case the reader is not familiar with the basic facts about the origins of the movement, they are as follows. In 1614, a German text was published at Kassel with the title of *Fama Fraternitatis, dess Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreutzes* [The Declaration of the Worthy Order of the Rosy Cross], which had been circulating in manuscript for some time, possibly since as early as 1610. The *Fama* purported to reveal the existence of a fraternity founded by one Christian Rosenkreuz who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was said

that Rosenkreuz founded the brotherhood after acquiring wisdom during a journey to the East. The members of his order traveled around healing the sick and acquiring and spreading knowledge, but always working incognito. When Christian Rosenkreuz died, his place of burial was kept secret. But recently, says the *Fama*, the burial vault has been discovered by the brotherhood, and this discovery heralds the dawn of a new age.

Soon after the *Fama*, the *Confessio Fraternitatis* appeared (1615), also published at Kassel, but this time in Latin. The *Confessio* repeated the message of the *Fama* with even greater force, holding out the promise of a reformed world and the overthrow of papal tyranny. Like the *Fama*, it boasted of the exalted and powerful knowledge possessed by the secret brotherhood.

Then, in 1616, a third work appeared, the strangest of all. It was published at Strasbourg in German under the title of *Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreutz* [The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz]. In it, the narrator, supposedly Christian Rosenkreuz himself, describes his experiences as a guest (not the bridegroom, as suggested by the title) at the wedding of a king and queen who dwell in a wondrous castle. The wedding develops into an extraordinary sequence of events in which the guests are subjected to tests of their worth and some are killed and brought to life again during an alchemical operation. Occult imagery abounds. There are portals guarded by lions, magical fountains, and ships corresponding to the signs of the zodiac. This luxuriant symbolism has lent itself to countless interpretations, but the connection between *The Chemical Wedding* and the other manifestos is not clear, nor are the precise motives of its creator in producing it.

Although *The Chemical Wedding* was published anonymously, its author was almost certainly a Tübingen Protestant theologian named Johann Valentin Andreae, who was also possibly the author or coauthor of the *Fama*. The authorship of the *Confessio* is unknown. Andreae himself is a strange and enigmatic figure who will be examined in a later chapter.

The publication of the Rosicrucian writings stirred up a great controversy in Germany. Many people wrote eulogizing the movement in the hope that they would be sought out and admitted to the order. Others claimed to be Rosicrucians themselves and issued pamphlets in the name of the brotherhood. Still others published writings attacking the movement as a mischievous or heretical organization. The more writings that appeared on the subject, the more confused the whole picture became. Since that time, the fog that surrounds Rosicrucianism has remained, but the cult, in one form or another, has survived and continues to gather adherents.

The durability of Rosicrucianism has, I believe, partly to do with the appealing quality of the rose-cross motif. The rose and the cross individually have been given various interpretations. In Chris-

tian symbolism, they are sometimes found representing the Virgin Mary and Christ, as in a prayer inspired by the Litany of Loreto, which refers to the rose as:

> Flower of the Cross, pure womb that blossoms
> Over all blooming and burning,
> Sacred Rose Mary.[2]

C. G. Jung has shown that the rose is a symbol lying deep in the collective unconscious which represents the maternal womb and perfection achieved by balance. The cross is an equally deep-seated symbol linked, according to Jung, with the tendency for man's inner consciousness to seek fourfold patterns. It appears in mythologies all over the world. In its Christian manifestation, it symbolizes suffering and sacrifice.

It has been suggested that the founders of the Rosicrucian movement, which was initially ultra-Protestant, selected the rose and the cross because these devices appeared on Luther's coat of arms and/or because they were on that of Andreae. Either of these theories may be true, but the symbol would not have caught hold in the way it did unless it had an intrinsic power. Nor would it have caused a continued growth around this central myth.

To understand why Rosicrucianism has survived for nearly four centuries—and possibly longer—we must look beyond the appeal of the rose-cross motif, powerful though it may be. This motif is merely the tip of a very large iceberg of symbolism, a symbolism that is capable of speaking to every age with renewed force, using a language that touches off responses deep within us. Whereas our outer consciousness expresses itself in words, our inner consciousness communicates in symbols. Throughout history we have used symbolic systems of one kind or another—astrology, Qabalah, alchemy, Tarot—to enable our inner selves to evolve. These systems are like springs welling up from some deep reservoir which appears to be fed by the totality of our experience of ourselves and our universe. Thus, any profound system of symbology has a universal dimension, through its source; a cultural dimension, through the society in which it flourishes; and an individual dimension, through its effect on the people who receive it.

It is not possible here to analyze fully the symbolism of the Rosicrucian manifestos, as this book deals mainly with their historical significance. But it is important to point out that they are capable of yielding an enormous wealth of meaning which can be extracted ei-

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[2] C. G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, translated by R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 363.

ther from a study of the imagery or by treating the language as a cipher. These writings have something powerful and personal to say to everyone who studies them in depth, and any group or individual taking the Rosicrucian symbolism and working with it wholeheartedly will partake of some of its force.

Since Rosicrucianism links up with the whole Hermetic/Qabalistic tradition, it is possible to apply it in various ways. For example, it can be used for mystical contemplation or for magical manipulation—the distinction being, broadly speaking, that in mysticism we attempt to communicate with the divine by projecting our consciousness beyond the physical world, whereas in magic we attempt to operate on the physical world using correspondences with the divine world. The Rosicrucian movement, as we shall see, has included followers of both paths.

A persistent feature of Rosicrucianism as it developed later was the idea of the mysterious adept commanding secret knowledge and strange powers. This was the basis of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's "Rosicrucian" novel, *Zanoni*, typified by a curious anecdote which I came across while researching in Bulwer-Lytton's library at Knebworth. Among the books is Mary Atwood's treatise on alchemy, *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850). Pasted into the fly-leaf is an advertisement from *The Times*, written in Latin, which translates as follows: "If this comes into the hands of a Brother of the Rosy Cross or an explorer of the Hermetic Transmutation I request that they get in touch with me by letter." It was signed "F. R. C.," which was clearly intended to stand for "Frater Rosae Crucis" (Brother of the Rosy Cross). The address given was the post office, Shaftsbury, Dorset. The original owner of the book, one Edward Bellamy, who worked at the British Museum Library, must have been an alchemical enthusiast, for, slipped into the book, is his account of the sequel.

It appears that, having twice written to "F. R. C." and received no reply, Bellamy returned home one evening to find that the adept had called while he was out. His wife described him as "a pink-coloured country-looking man of grave but pleasant aspect," who explained that he was leaving the following day for a voyage round the world. As he left, the adept said: "Your husband will know me by this." Then he took from his neck "a remarkable looking chain of dull and soft-looking gold links, a most superb cross of rose-coloured enamel studded with diamonds of the size," she said, "of large peas, with a serpent of blue enamel round it." He allowed the wife to examine the jewel and then left, never to call again. Stories of similar adepts abound in the literature of Rosicrucianism.

Other aspects of the Rosicrucian legend have also exercised fascination. The whereabouts of Rosenkreutz's burial vault, for example, has been a favorite subject of speculation. Dr. R. W. Felkin, an English occultist and a member of the Hermetic Order of the

Golden Dawn, set off in search of the vault in 1914. So absorbed was he in his quest that he remained unaware of the signs of impending war until it was almost too late. He was able to leave Germany at the eleventh hour and through the help of Freemason friends in Hanover and Amsterdam.

In the Third Reich, Rosicrucianism became a *bête noire* of the Nazis. As head of the S. S., Himmler commissioned a history of the brotherhood, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*, by Hans Schick, a book to which I shall be referring later.[3] In one department of Himmler's foreign intelligence service, a group of researchers "studied such important matters as Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, the symbolism of the suppression of the harp in Ulster, and the occult significance of top-hats at Eton."[4]

Rosicrucianism in various forms is very much alive in various parts of the world today. Yet there is only one book in English that approaches being a comprehensive history of the movement, namely, A. E. Waite's *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*.[5] Frances Yates' book, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* covers only the very early stages of the movement's development, and Frans Wittemans' *A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians* is sketchy and in places highly inaccurate.[6] The intention of the present volume is to fill this gap by telling the story of the development of Rosicrucianism, beginning with its roots.

To complete this introduction, I must record my thanks to a number of people. First of all, as a long-standing admirer of Colin Wilson's work, it gave me great pleasure when he agreed to write the Foreword. In previous books, I have had occasion to thank Ellic Howe, who has been a generous mentor over many years. For this book, he gave me his unstinting help and advice, lent me important material, and read and commented on the manuscript. Likewise, I must thank Gerald Yorke for the loan of material and for helpful suggestions. I am also grateful to Dr. Richard van Dülmen of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences for giving me the benefit of his specialized knowledge of Rosicrucian history; to R. A. Gilbert for the loan of material relating to A. E. Waite; and to the publishers mentioned in various footnotes who gave me permission to make quotations. Finally, space prevents me from listing here the many friends in this country and abroad who have encouraged me by their interest and enthusiasm and so helped me to complete what has been an arduous but rewarding task.

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[3] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum* (Berlin: Nordland Verlag, 1942).
[4] H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 23.
[5] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider, 1924).
[6] Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972); Frans Wittemans, *A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians*, Durvad (a.k.a. F. G. Davis) trans. (London: Rider, 1938).

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Fourteen years ago, when I first began writing this book, it was not generally possible to refer to Rosicrucianism without a great deal of explanation. Many people had never heard of it, and those who had tended to possess only the haziest idea of what it was. Historians, if they spoke of it at all, were inclined to dismiss it as a fringe topic of little or no scholarly interest. Along with other esoteric matters, it belonged to a disreputable district that was either to be avoided or viewed with disdainful curiosity from the main road.

Today, as the book goes into its second edition, the situation is entirely different. Esotericism is steadily being reclaimed for academic use. Avenues of tidy methodology, lit by impeccable scholarship and paved by the work of such scholars as Frances Yates, are advancing even deeper into the esoteric ghetto, to the regret of those who found in its very murkiness a special promise of adventure, but to the enrichment of historiography as a whole.

One result of this process is that the word "Rosicrucian" is now common currency among historians. It, too, has been reclaimed. This book, while not pretending to be more than an outline, remains the only general history of Rosicrucianism from its inceptions to the present day. I have made certain revisions to it on account of my change of view on certain questions and in the light of comments received in letters, for which I am most grateful. My own research in Rosicrucianism and related areas continues. In the meantime, I hope that the new edition of this book will continue to stimulate interest in this rich field.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

There is a synchronicity in the fact that, as this book goes into its third edition, we stand at the threshold of a new millennium. Millenarian ideas helped to launch Rosicrucianism, and it is tempting to see parallels between the present age and that of the Rosicrucian manifestos. The two eras have much in common: momentous changes, bitter divisions and conflicts, a sense of this world having gone wrong and a yearning for a better one. Understandably, the Rosicrucian promise of a new age based on an ancient wisdom retains for many its appeal and relevance.

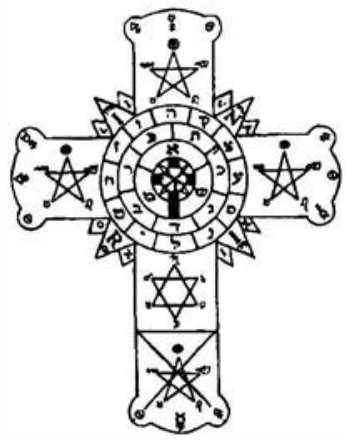
In a way, Rosicrucianism has come full circle. Thanks to the fall of the Iron Curtain, it is now once again in evidence in the territory—once called Bohemia, now the Czech Republic—which played such a key role in its early history. It has, so to speak, returned home. As proof of this, a conference called "The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited," was held in the enchanting town of Česky

Krumlov on the river Moldau in September 1995. The conference, which was organized by the New York Open Center and *Gnosis* Magazine, in honor of the late Frances Yates, would, of course, have been unthinkable in such a setting a decade earlier. It was at this event that the idea for a new edition of this book with its present publisher was born during discussions with Donald Weiser and Betty Lundsted. I would like to express my appreciation to them and also to Vladislav Zadrobilek, present at the same meeting, who has undertaken a Czech edition with his firm, Trigon Press. I also wish to renew my thanks to Colin Wilson for his insightful Foreword.

In preparing the text for this edition, I have filled out certain aspects of the Rosicrucian story and have taken account of the work that other scholars have carried out in this field since the appearance of the previous edition. Much important research, for example, has centered on the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam, founded by Joost R. Ritman, whose acquisitions include highly important textual evidence on the origins of the Rosicrucian movement. Carlos Gilly, an associate of this library, has in recent years carried out and published pioneering studies on the early Rosicrucians, which have thrown a whole new light on the subject and rendered obsolete much of the work of previous authors. Other scholars who have greatly advanced research in the broader history of Rosicrucianism include Roland Edighoffer and Antoine Faivre. I have also gleaned much fresh insight into the subject from Tobias Churton, a writer and film-maker who has created remarkable documentaries on the Gnostic and Rosicrucian traditions.

To survey all of this new work in a book of this size would be impossible, but, where significant recent research has been done, I have at least tried to refer the reader to the relevant sources. Omissions, however, are inevitable. No account of Rosicrucianism can ever be complete, as the history continues to be written—and created.

—Christopher McIntosh



Chapter 1

Ancient Doctrines Rediscovered

The Rosicrucian movement is part of a way of thinking whose roots go far back into antiquity and which can be described as the Western esoteric tradition. This tradition, drawing on many sources, has run through European history exercising a strong influence, sometimes underground, at other times flourishing in the open. Although frequently in conflict with Christianity, Christian thinking was often influenced by it, and *vice versa*. This way of thinking amounts almost to a separate language and, without an understanding of it, much that is important in the history of Western thought cannot be grasped. The poetry of William Blake, for example, remained largely uncomprehended until recent research showed that he spoke the language of the esoteric tradition.

A great revival of this tradition began in Italy during the Renaissance and opened up a new phase in the development of esoteric thought. From then on it had an assured, if still somewhat underground, place in Western thought. The Rosicrucian movement belongs to this phase of esotericism. In order to understand the esoteric tradition, we must follow it back to its origins and examine the different ingredients that went into it.

The philosophical milieu in which the tradition began is loosely known as Gnosticism, a movement beginning in the fourth century B.C., which had Egypt as its focal point of development. Egypt had been penetrated first by Persian mystical beliefs during the Persian conquest in 525 B.C. then by Greek and oriental influences following its occupation by Alexander the Great in 333–331 B.C. Out of this mixture came a religious outlook with the following main characteristics.

The Gnostics saw the universe as a duality between spirit and matter. They conceived of a supreme divine being who was immate-

rial, eternal, unreachable, and unknowable. In the Gnostic view, the spirit is a fragment of this universal being which has split off and become imprisoned in matter. The world of matter is not the creation of the supreme God but of a lower god, or demiurge, who has at his beck and call a number of minions, called archons (rulers), who have different spheres of influence in the material world that correspond to the planetary spheres. The uppermost sphere, that of Saturn, forms the boundary between the lower and upper worlds. Below is the evil world with its archons; above is the divine world governed by good spirits. Omar Khayyâm expresses this in verse:

> Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
> I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
> And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;
> But not the Master–knot of Human Fate.[1]

Human beings, according to this view, are composed of a body and a soul, both of which belong to the material world, and a divine spark, or *pneuma*, which is the godly element within. As long as humans are kept in ignorance of their true position, by the demiurge, they continue to be prisoners. But, sometimes, messages from beyond the spheres are received by certain individuals who then become aware of their imprisonment and are able to pass the knowledge on to others. This knowledge, or *gnosis*, is the most important weapon in freeing the spirit from its bondage.

It is not enough, however, for Gnostics merely to know that they are imprisoned. They also need to know the workings of the world that surrounds them so that they can be better equipped to overcome it, or so that they can use it in a positive way—because not all Gnostic schools saw the world as absolute evil.

The Gnostic cosmology was taken to a large extent from the Stoic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, who saw the cosmos as a living organism, subject, like every other living thing, to the laws of birth and death. When the universe dies, according to Heraclitus, it leaves behind a seed from which a new cosmos grows. Everything in this cosmos derives from a single basic substance, which Heraclitus saw as a kind of fire. "For Fire all things are exchanged," he wrote "and Fire for all things, even as wares are exchanged for gold and gold for wares."[2] Thus everything moves in a cyclical process, an idea often represented by the *ourobouros*, a snake biting its own tail. This symbol came to be very widely used and is frequently found in alchemical contexts.

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[1] Edward Fitzgerald, *Rubâiyât of Omar Khayyâm* (New York: Miller Graphics/Crown, 1979), verse 34, p. 44.

[2] Heraclitus of Ephesus. "Fragment 22" in James Adams, *The Religious Teachers of Greece* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 228.

The Gnostics furthermore conceived that, in order to initiate the process of growth, an act of sexual generation involving a universal male and female principle was required. The sexual analogy was also used to illustrate how a human being's "virgin" soul becomes implanted with the "seed" of God in a mystical union, or *hieros gamos*. Sexual symbolism featured prominently in Gnostic ceremonies and is a theme to which I shall be returning later.

The Gnostic belief in a graduation from coarse matter to pure spirit is reflected in the way their communities were organized. These were divided into three main groups. At the lowest level were those entirely preoccupied with material and mundane things. As long as they remained in this state, there was no possible redemption for them. Next came those not capable of direct perception of the godly, but who believed in a higher reality and were therefore capable of partial redemption. At the highest level came those who were possessed by the spirit of God, or *pneuma*. These were known as "pneumatics." They acted as prophets and were capable of full redemption. Between these three groups, there were also many finer, intermediary grades. A system of ceremonies accompanied each level and, people who had been initiated to a particular grade had to remain silent about it to those of inferior grades. It will be seen from this description that most of the elements of the modern secret society were present in the Gnostic community.

Some of the early Church fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, were influenced by Gnosticism, and a number of Christian Gnostic groups were formed in the early years of the Christian era. The main body of the Church, however, opposed Gnosticism, both inside and outside its ranks. The struggle continued into the Middle Ages, during which Gnosticism still persisted in various parts of Europe. The Bogomils of Bulgaria, for example, were a Gnostic sect who ate no flesh apart from fish. They believed that fish were the only creatures that did not generate sexually. A similar Gnostic sect was the Albigenses of southern France who, like the Bogomils, advocated sexual continence and opposed the eating of meat. They were savagely wiped out in the 13th century in a crusade inspired by Pope Innocent III. After this, Gnosticism went underground, though, even in the later Middle Ages, its influence broke through here and there. In the Renaissance, as we shall see, it came back into its own.

Gnosticism also produced the series of writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistos, which were to have an enormous influence on the esoteric thinking of the Renaissance and after. Hermes Trismegistos (the "Thrice–Great") is an amalgam of the Greek messenger god and the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth, though in the Renaissance he was considered by many to be an actual historical figure. He is the supposed author of a body of mystical lore composed around the beginning of the Christian era in Egypt.

The best known of the Hermetic treatises is the *Poimandres* (or *Pymander*), whose author describes how, during meditation, he conversed with the *Poimandres* or *Nous* (mind) of the supreme being, who unfolded to him a teaching that is basically Gnostic.[3] Human beings originate from God, but have fallen into a world of matter created by the demiurge, who is himself an offspring of the divine intellect. After death, those who have achieved *gnosis* rise up through the spheres to be reunited with the Godhead.

To say that the Hermetic writings taught a contempt for matter, however, would be misleading. Unlike the more extreme forms of Gnosticism, Hermeticism seems to see matter as a necessary part of creation which must be understood and mastered if the spirit is to rise above it. Hence, along with the Hermetic mystical doctrines go certain teachings about the workings and manipulation of matter. This part of the Hermetic writings became the basis of alchemy, which is therefore often referred to as "the Hermetic Art." Hermetic alchemy included theories about how to heal sickness. As this was supposedly one of the main activities of the original Rosicrucian brotherhood, it may be useful to examine some of the ingredients of Hermetic physiology and medicine.

In one of the Hermetic texts, the *Sermon of Isis to Horus*, a dialogue takes place in which Isis reveals to Horus that the human body is "a union and blend of the four elements; and from this blend and union a certain vapour rises, which is enveloped by the soul . . . its nature. And thus the differences of changes are effected both in soul and body.[4]

> For if there be in the corporeal make-up more of fire, thereon the soul, which is by nature hot, taking unto itself another thing that's hot, and [so] being made more fiery, makes life more energetic and more passionate, and the body quick and active. . . . If [there be] more of air . . . life becomes light and springy and unsteady both in the soul and body.

Isis goes on to say that an excess of water makes the creature supple and "able easily to meet and join with others, through water's power of union and communion with the rest of things." If the earthly element is in excess, then "the creature's soul is dull, for it has not its body texture loosely knit." In this case, the body is also heavy and inert. "But there is a balanced state of all [the elements],

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[3] W. Wynn Westcott edited a volume called *The Divine Pymander, or The Pymander of Hermes*, published in 1894 by the Theosopohical Society in London.

[4] "Sermon of Isis to Horus" in G. R. S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, Vol. 3 (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1992, reprint), p. 124.

then is the animal made hot for doing, light for moving, well-mixed for contact, and excellent for holding things together."[5]

Different animals, the sermon explains, have different elements predominating—air in the case of birds, for example, and water for fish. Human beings, however, have a share of all the elements. When they are in their original state of balance, human beings are healthy. But if the equilibrium is impaired and there is a predominance of one or more of the elements, then the vapour that links soul and body is upset and the body becomes ill.[6]

The parts of the Hermetic corpus dealing with alchemy, astrology, and magic formed one of the main pillars of later Western occultism, and I shall examine its revival in due course.

The intellectual and religious climate that produced Gnosticism and Hermeticism also produced the set of doctrines known as Neoplatonism, another movement of great importance in the esoteric tradition. This system of thought is based on Plato's teachings of the immortality of the soul, of a transcendent principle of good, and of a dualistic state of affairs in which the world perceived by our senses is illusory and masks a real world accessible only to our minds. Neoplatonism, which emerged in Egypt between the third and sixth centuries A.D., combined Platonic philosophy with Aristotelian, Stoic, Pythagorean, and Gnostic teachings. Its founder is said to have been a somewhat shadowy figure called Saccas (c. 175–c. 242), but the best-known proponent of Neoplatonism was Plotinus (204–270). Born at Lycopolis in Egypt, Plotinus studied under Saccas at Alexandria and later taught his philosophy at Rome. His teachings were put together with a commentary by his pupil Porphyry (c. 232–304) and published under the title of the *Enneads*.[7]

Plotinus conceived of the world as coming into being through a process of emanation from a supreme cosmic unity inaccessible to human reason. This being gave rise to a World of Spirit which in turn generated a World Soul, which then branched out into individual souls. The soul, said Plotinus, "has given itself to each of the separate material masses . . . it makes them living beings not by merging into body but by giving forth, without any change in itself, images or likenesses of itself like one face caught by many mirrors." In another passage, Plotinus brings in a simile reminiscent of alchemy: "Gold is degraded when it is mixed with earthy particles; if these be worked out, the gold is left and is beautiful, isolated from all that is foreign, gold with gold alone. And so the Soul; let it be but cleared of the desires that came by its too intimate converse with

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[5] See "Sermon of Isis to Horus," pp. 124–125.

[6] "Sermon of Isis to Horus," pp.125–126.

[7] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, Stephan Mackenna, trans. (London: Faber & Faber, 1966); reissued 1992, Burdette, NY: Larson Publications.

the body, emancipated from all the passions . . . in that moment the ugliness that came only from the alien is stripped away."[8]

It is important to mention the Pythagorean strain in Neoplatonism, since this was an aspect that greatly appealed to Renaissance scholars. Pythagoras (c. 580–c. 497 B.C.) was the founder of a school in the Greek colony of Croton in southern Italy that lasted for a century or more after his death. This organization was not only a philosophical school, but also a kind of religious brotherhood believing in the transmigration of souls and, therefore, in abstinence from the eating of meat, since animals were also held to have souls.

The most important contribution of the Pythagorean school was its work in the field of numbers and proportion. It was this school that discovered the numerical relations of musical intervals. They found that, if a piece of string at a given tension is sounded on half its length, the resulting tone is an octave above the tone resonating on the full string. If the length is reduced by two-thirds, the tone is a harmonic fifth higher. Likewise, a reduction in length of three-quarters gives an interval of a perfect fourth. This discovery of musical harmony was developed by the Greeks into a notion of the whole cosmos as an orchestra, with each of the planets sounding a different note and producing the "music of the spheres."

There remains one strain in the Western esoteric tradition to mention, possibly the most important of all: the Jewish Qabalah. This is a highly complex collection of mystical teachings whose exact origin is unknown but which emerged in two main phases. The first phase took place among the medieval Jews of Spain, who produced the *Sepher Yetzirah* (Book of Formation) between the third and sixth centuries A.D., and the *Zohar* (Book of Splendor) in the 13th century. The latter purports to derive from a rabbi of the second century, but was probably written down by Rabbi Moses de Leon shortly before it came into circulation. The second phase is what is known as the Lurianic Qabalah, after Isaac Luria of Safed in Galilee (1534–1572). He and his followers developed the Zoharic Qabalah and introduced a number of new concepts.

The Qabalah fulfills a number of purposes. It is, first, a system of cosmology and theology explaining the nature of God, the origin of the world, and the character of man's destiny. It is also a means of interpreting the scriptures by the application of certain rules which yield an "inner" meaning to the language of the Bible. Finally, it embodies certain mystical techniques whereby the individual learns to commune with higher realities.

The Qabalah conceives of creation as emanating outward from God in a series of ten basic forces or principles, called *Sephiroth*, which are normally arranged in a pattern known as the Tree of Life.

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[8] See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, Ennead I, Tractate I, Section 8, and Tractate VI, Section 5, pp. 60–61.

These ten principles are held to run right through creation, from universal being down to human kind—another form of the conception of macrocosm and microcosm. Another part of the Qabalistic scheme is the notion of the Four Worlds descending from the Godhead: *Atziluth*, The World of Emanation; *Briah*, The World of Creation; *Jetzirah*, The World of Formation; and *Assiah*, The World of Action, the world of matter in which we live.

One important part of Qabalistic doctrine concerns the Hebrew language, which is believed to be of divine origin. According to this doctrine, each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet represents an elemental force in creation. All this was eagerly taken up by the esotericists of the Renaissance and adapted to Christianity, so that, out of the Jewish Qabalah, there developed over time a Christian Qabalah. Later I shall give a fuller account of how Qabalistic teachings affected Rosicrucianism.

These, then, are the main esoteric traditions that were rediscovered by the Renaissance scholars. The most important center of this rediscovery was the Florentine court of Cosimo de Medici, who conceived a passion for Hermetic and Neoplatonic literature after meeting a mysterious Greek scholar, Georgios Gemistos, who went by the name of Pletho (from the Greek *plethon*, meaning "the full"). Pletho gave a series of lectures in Florence in 1439 tinged with Gnostic and Neoplatonic ideas.

It is believed that these lectures inspired Cosimo de Medici to found his Platonic academy and to commission the best available scholars to gather and translate classical texts. The most prominent of these scholars was Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) who, besides works by Plato, translated the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which he saw as containing a core of teachings handed down from very ancient times through Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Hermes himself, whom Ficino accepted as a real person. It appears to have been Ficino who introduced the vocabulary of special terms describing wisdom handed down from sage to sage. In time, the list of sages came to include Moses, Dionysius the Areopagite, and even Saint Augustine.

Ficino's influence extended throughout Europe. This belief in an inherited core of secret wisdom captured many imaginations and reappeared prominently, as we shall see, in the Rosicrucian writings.

Ficino's pupil, Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) was among these responsible for stimulating interest in the Qabalah. His *Nine Hundred Conclusions* (1486), which used Qabalistic and Neoplatonic ideas in an attempt to find common ground between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, brought accusations of heresy against him. For some time Pico was plagued by Church authorities, until Pope Alexander VI absolved him of heresy in 1493.

Another advocate of Qabalism was the Franciscan Francesco di Giorgio di Venetas, whose *De Harmonia Mundi* combines Qabalism

with a preoccupation with the ideas of universal harmony and the music of the spheres. Also important in the Qabalistic revival was a Jewish refugee from Spain, Judah Arbanel, whose *Dialoghi d'Amore*, written under the name of Leone Ebreo, was brought out in 1535 and later achieved wide currency through being included in the collection of Johann Pistorius, *Artis Cabalisticae*, published at Basel in 1587.

By the early 16th century these different elements had been successfully amalgamated to form a new language, a language which, when transplanted to German soil in the period leading up to the Rosicrucian manifestos, played a key role in shaping the movement.

(a)

(b)

Figure 1. Prophetic drawings from Simon Studion's manuscript, the *Naometria* (1604), showing (a) the New Age riding forth on the four-headed beast of Ezekiel, while Pope and Emperor are shipwrecked; and (b) The Mystical Jerusalem (*photographs: Württemberg State Library, Stuttgart*).

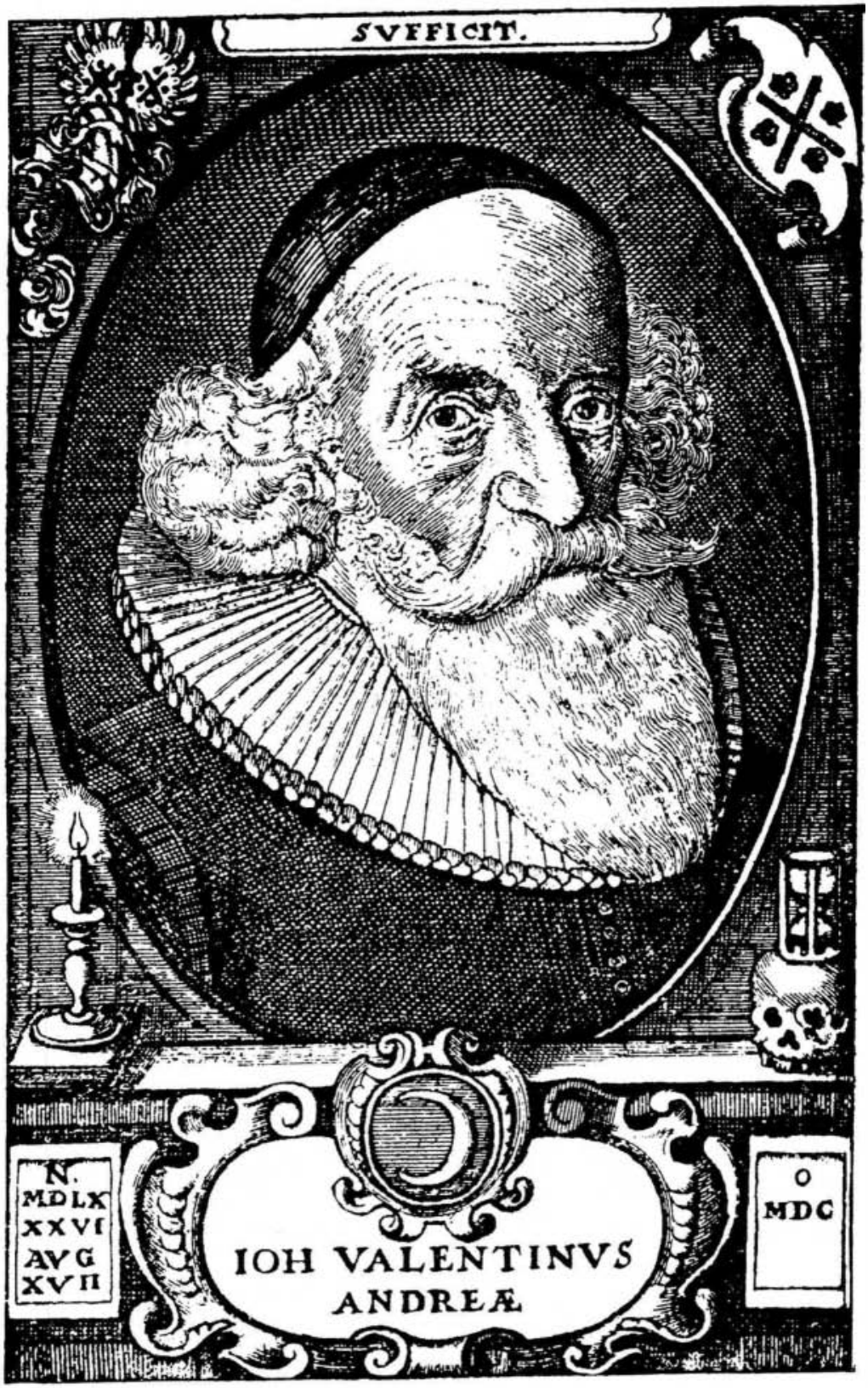


Figure 2. Johann Valentin Andreæ at age 62.

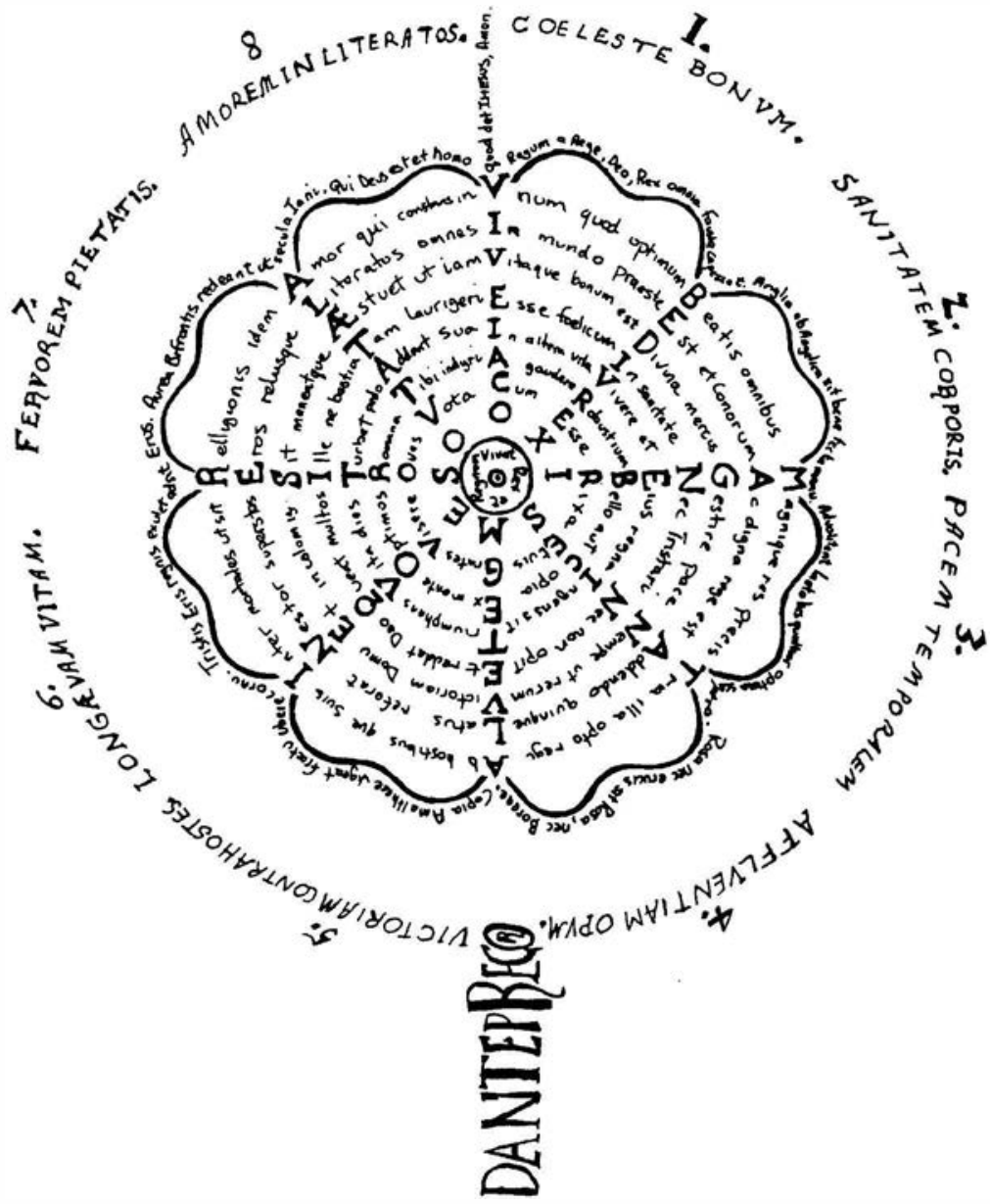


Figure 3. A message of Christmas greetings set out in the shape of a rose and sent by Michael Maier to King James I of England in 1612 (*copied from the original by Adam McLean*).

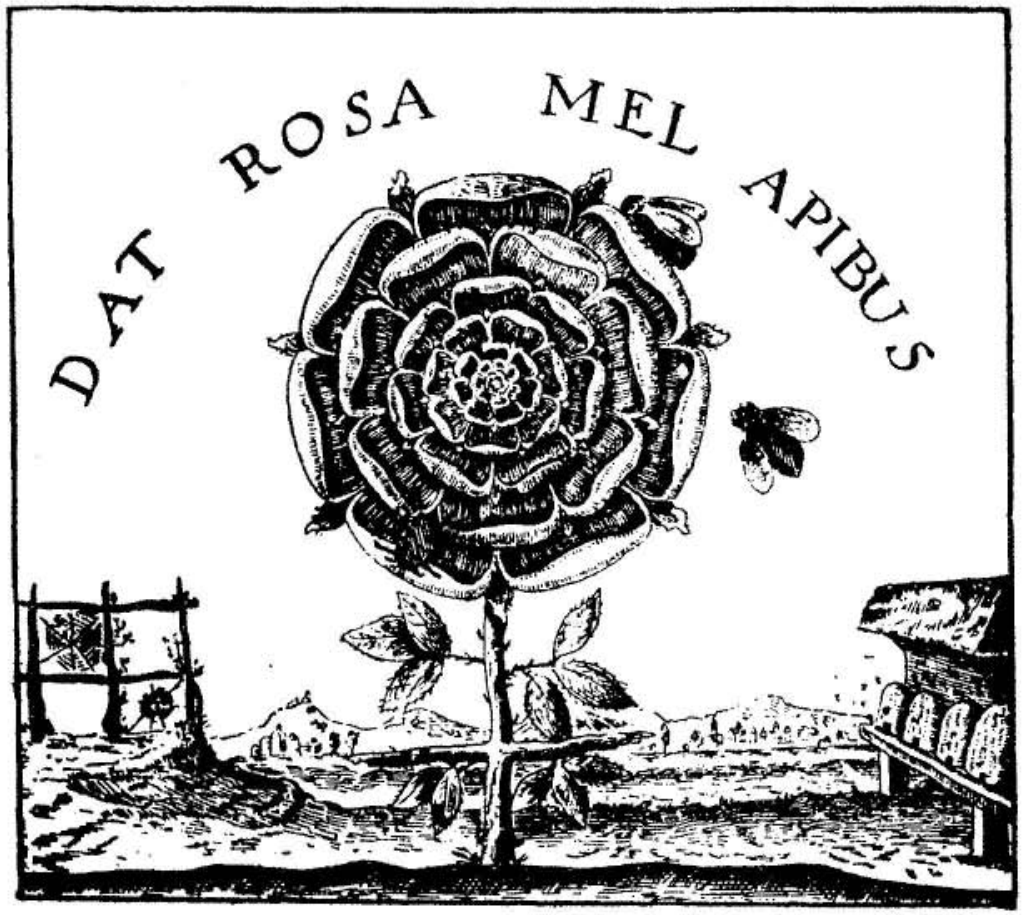


Figure 4. An illustration from the title page of Robert Fludd's *Summum Bonum*, Part IV (1629), a defense of the Rosicrucian fraternity. The inscription translates: "The rose gives honey to the bees."

Die Lehren der Roſenkreuzer

aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert.

Oder

Einfältig *ABC* Büchlein

für junge Schüler

ſo ſich täglich fleiſſig üben in der Schule des H. Geiſtes;

Bildnißweiſe vor die Augen gemahlet

zum neuen Jahrs-Exercitio

in dem

Natürlichen und Theologiſchen Lichte

von einem Bruder der Fraternitaet { CHRISTI / des Roſenkreuzes } P. F.

zum erſtenmal öffentlich bekannt gemacht,

und

mit einigen Figuren von gleichem Inhalt vermehrt durch P. S.

Altona,
gedruckt und verlegt von Joh. Dav. Ad. Eckhardt, Königl. Dän. privil. Buchdrucker.

Figure 5. Title page to the first part of *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*, published in Germany in 1785.

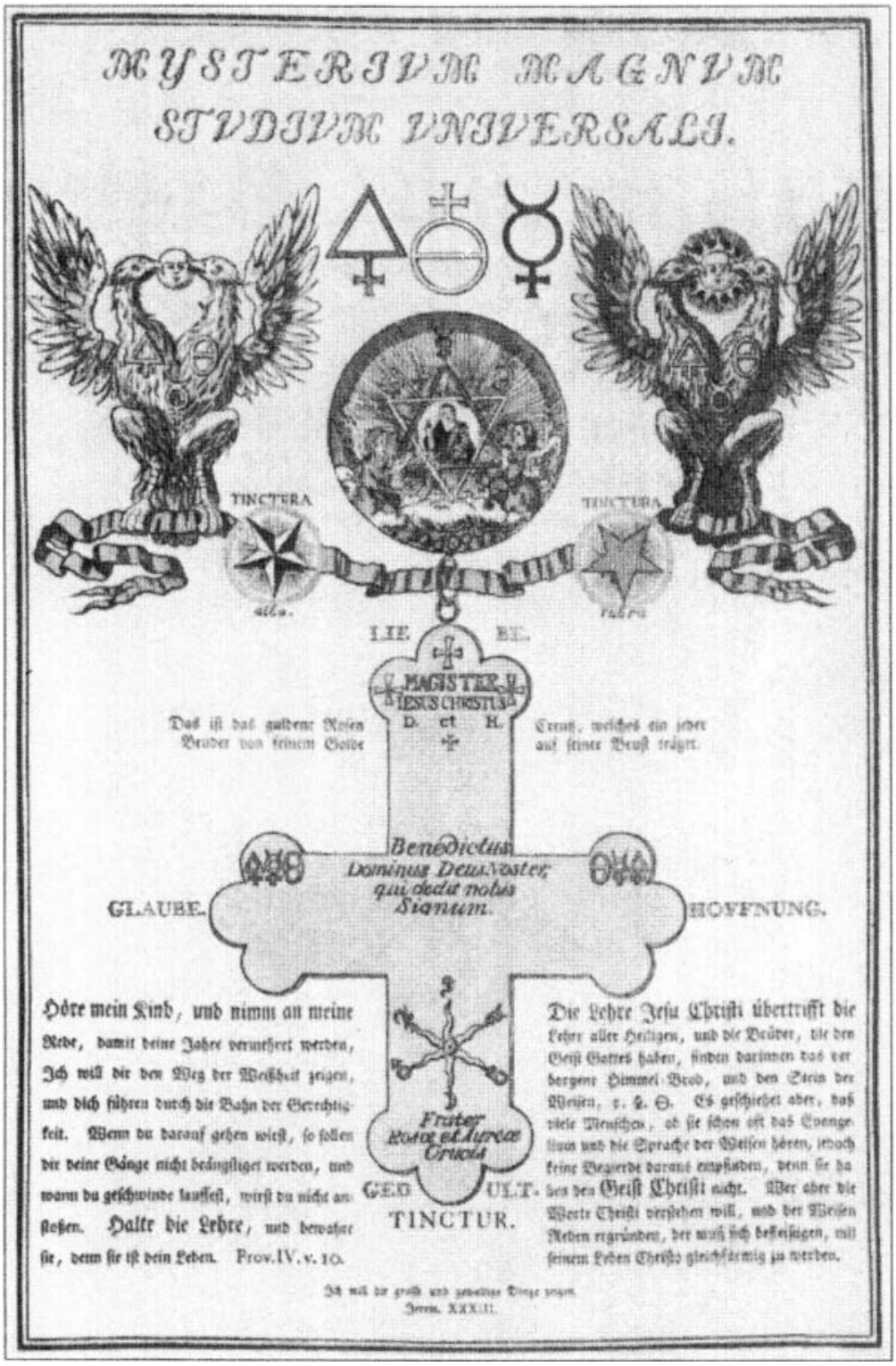

MYSTERIVM MAGNVM
STVDIVM VNIVERSALI.
TINCTURA
TINCTURA
MAGISTER JESUS CHRISTUS
D. et H.
Benedictus
Dominus Deus Noster,
qui dedit nobis
Signum.
GLAUBE.
HOFFNUNG.
Höre mein Kind, und nimm an meine Rede, damit deine Jahre vermehret werden, Ich will dir den Weg der Weißheit zeigen, und dich führen durch die Bahn der Gerechtigkeit. Wenn du darauf gehen wirst, so sollen dir deine Gänge nicht beängstiget werden, und wann du geschwinde laufffest, wirst du nicht anstoßen. Halte die Lehre, und bewahre sie, denn sie ist dein Leben. Prov. IV. v. 10.
Die Lehre Jesu Christi übertrifft die Lehre aller Heiligen, und die Brüder, die den Geist Gottes haben, finden darinnen das verborgene Himmel-Brod, und den Stein der Weisen, s. L. S. Es geschiehet aber, daß viele Menschen, ob sie schon oft das Evangelium und die Sprache der Weisen hören, jedoch keine Begierde darauf empfinden, denn sie haben den Geist Christi nicht. Wer aber die Worte Christi verstehen will, und der Weisen Reden ergründen, der muß sich befleißigen, mit seinem Leben Christo gleichförmig zu werden.
Frater
Rosæ et Aureæ
Crucis
GEO
ULT.
TINCTUR.

Figure 6. Pendant from the *Secret Symbols*. It is described as "the golden Rosy Cross which each brother wears on his breast." The symbols above are alchemical, the double-headed eagles to left and right representing, respectively, the white and red tinctures.

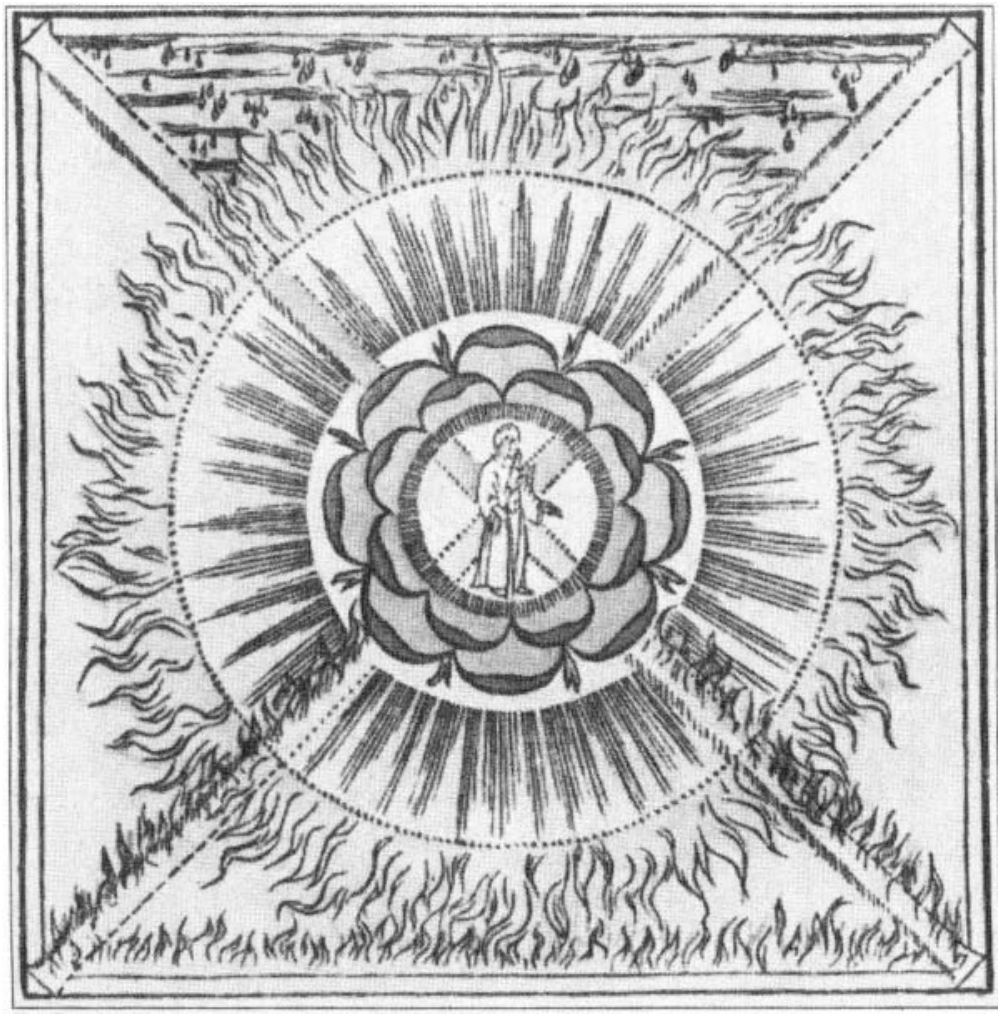


Figure 7. Rose Cross with the figure of Christ in the center, from the *Secret Symbols*.

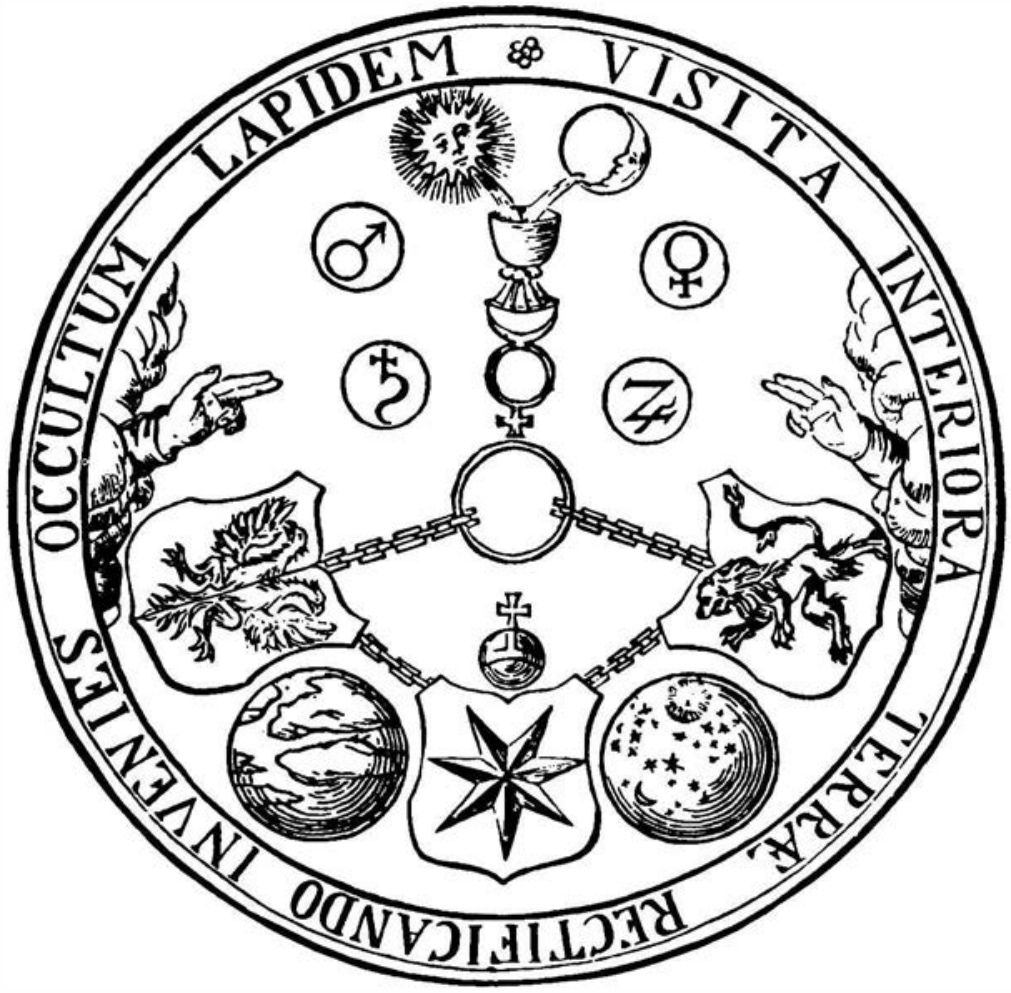


Figure 8. The Emerald Table of Hermes from the *Secret Symbols* (see chapter 6 for an explanation of the emblems).

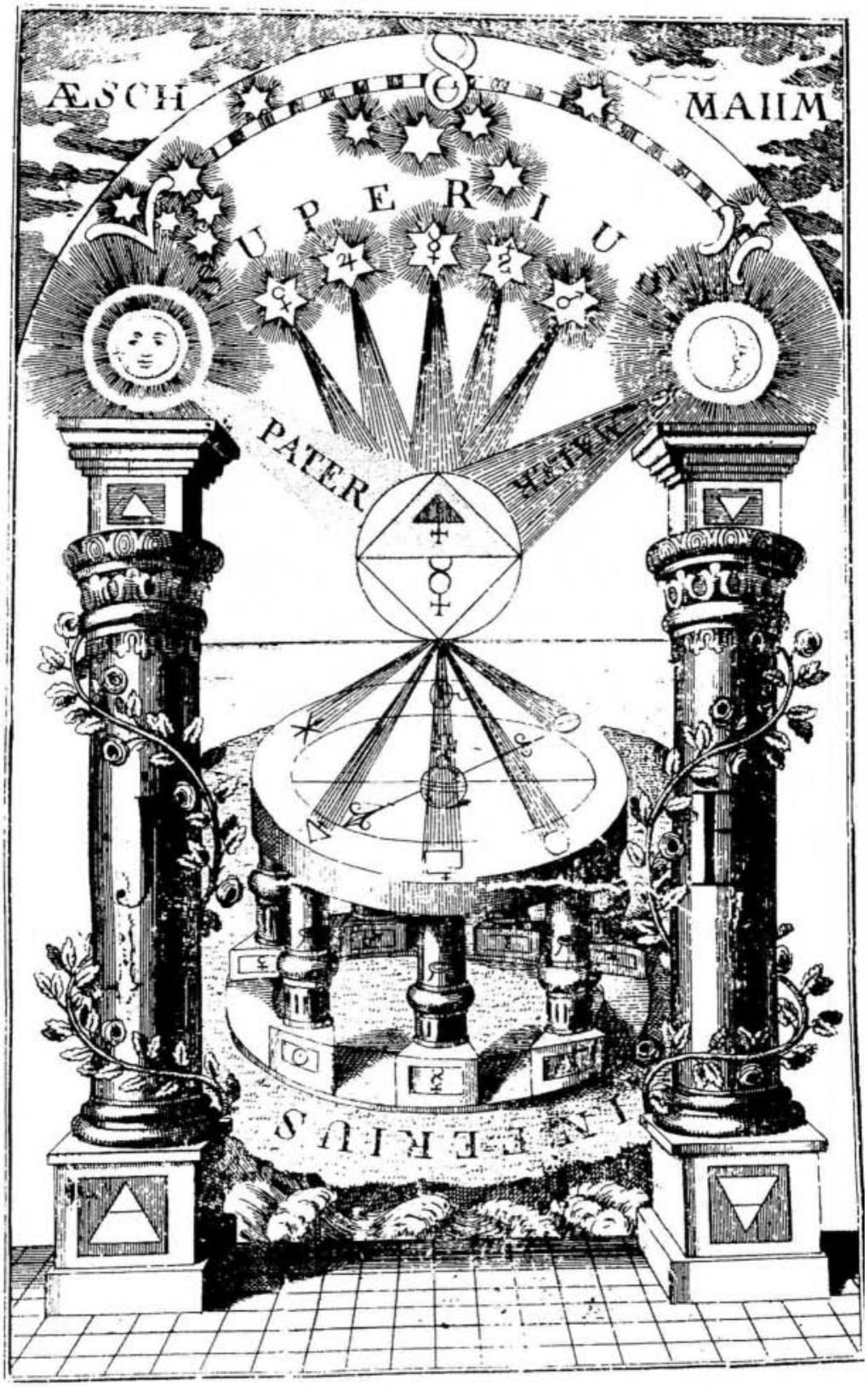
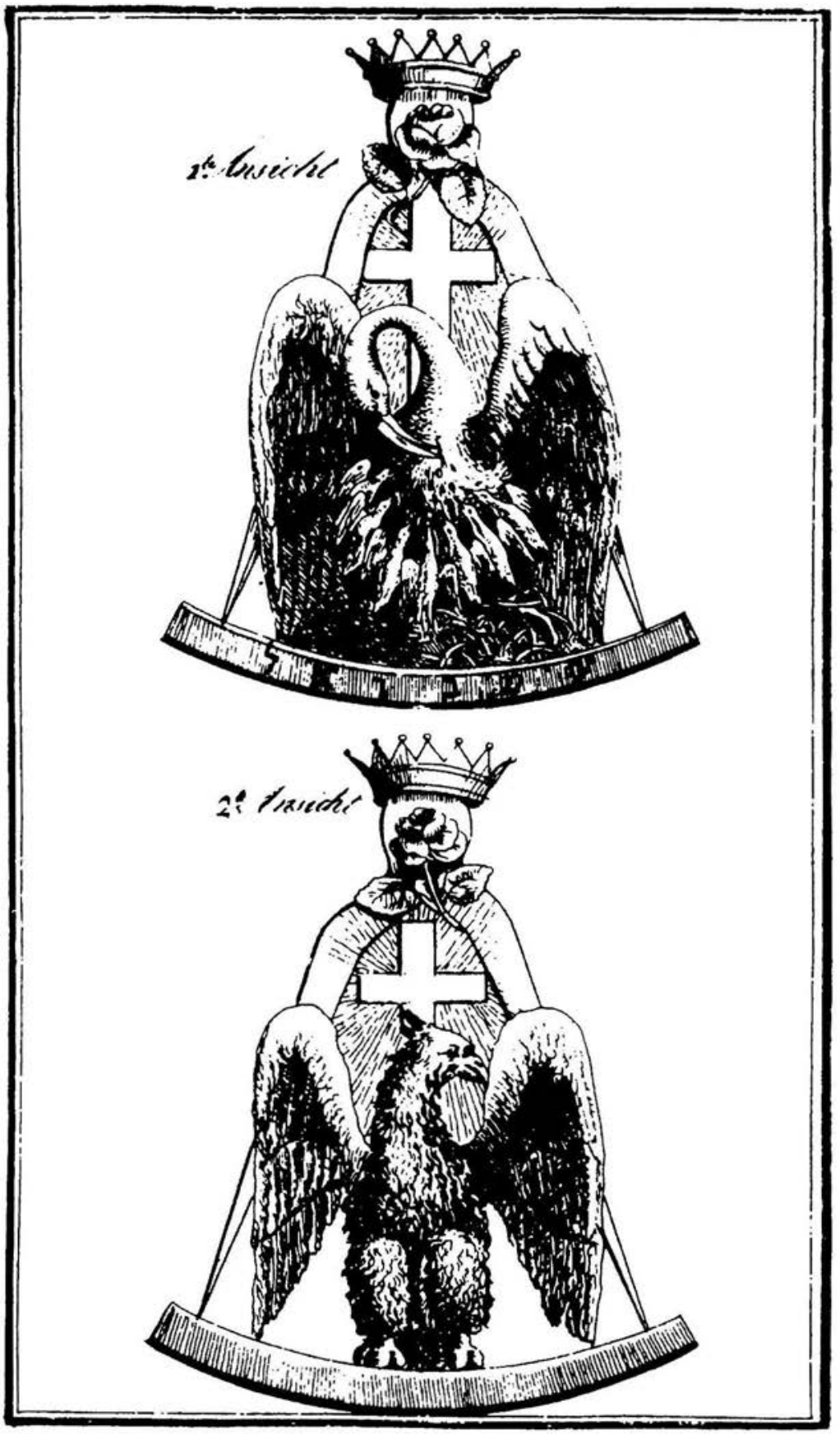


Figure 9. Creation of the world out of fire (*aysh*) and water (*mayim*): an illustration from *Compass der Weisen* [Compass of the Wise], a German alchemical/Rosicrucian work first published in 1779.



Figrue 10. German masonic jewel of the Rose Cross (18th) degree. On one side is a pelican, on the other an eagle.

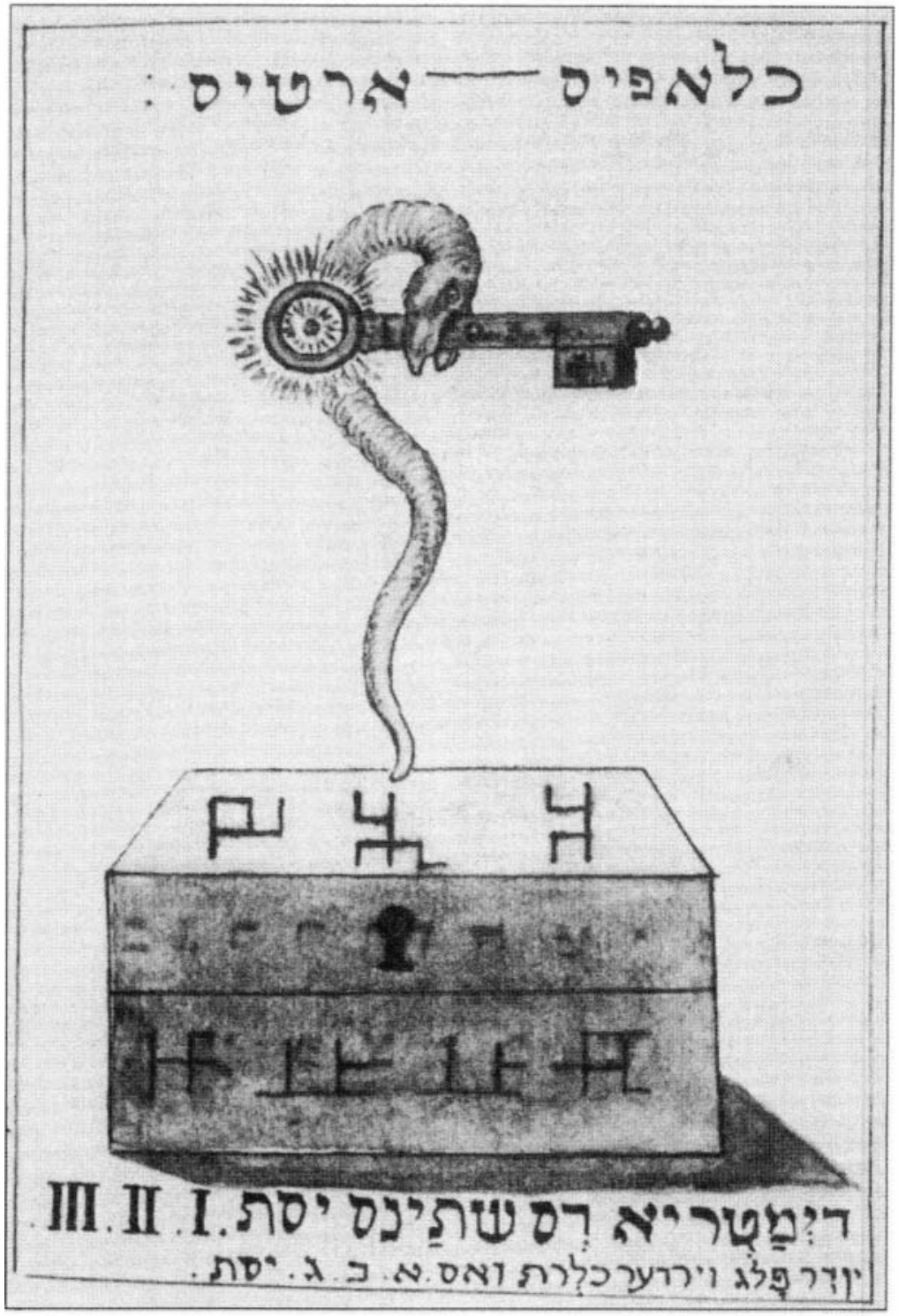


Figure 11. An illustration from *Aleph* by Archarion, a German Rosicrucian manuscript of 1802. The serpent appears to represent the Gnostic god Serapis and is holding the key of the four elements which can unlock the secrets of matter (*photograph: Austrian National Library, Vienna*).

Figure 12. The Trinity, from *Aleph*. The rays of lettering spell out the ten *sephiroth* of the Qabalah and their corresponding God names.

Figure 13. Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897), founder of the French Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross.

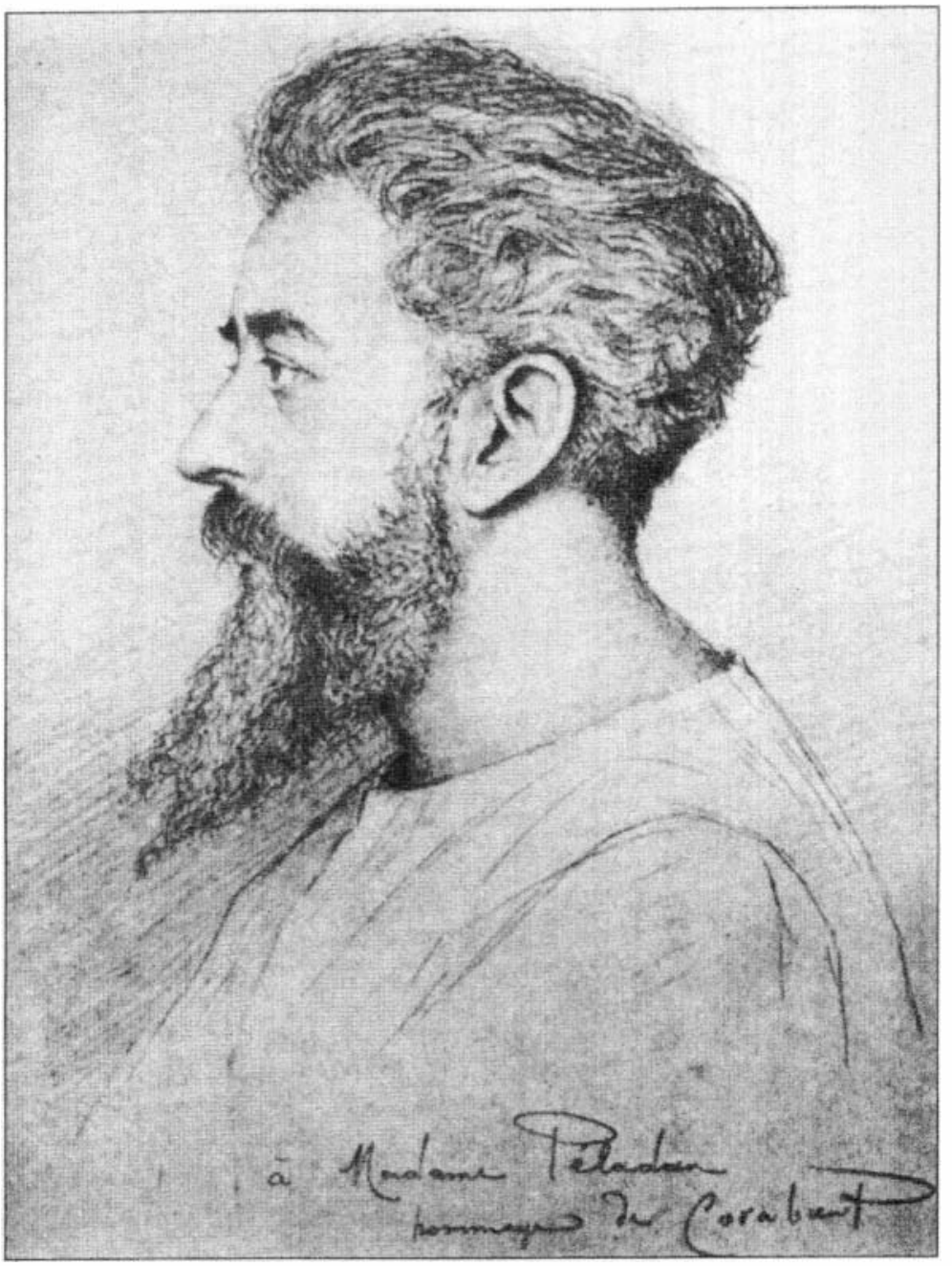


Figure 14. Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), an associate and later rival of de Guaita and founder of the Order of the Catholic Rose Cross.

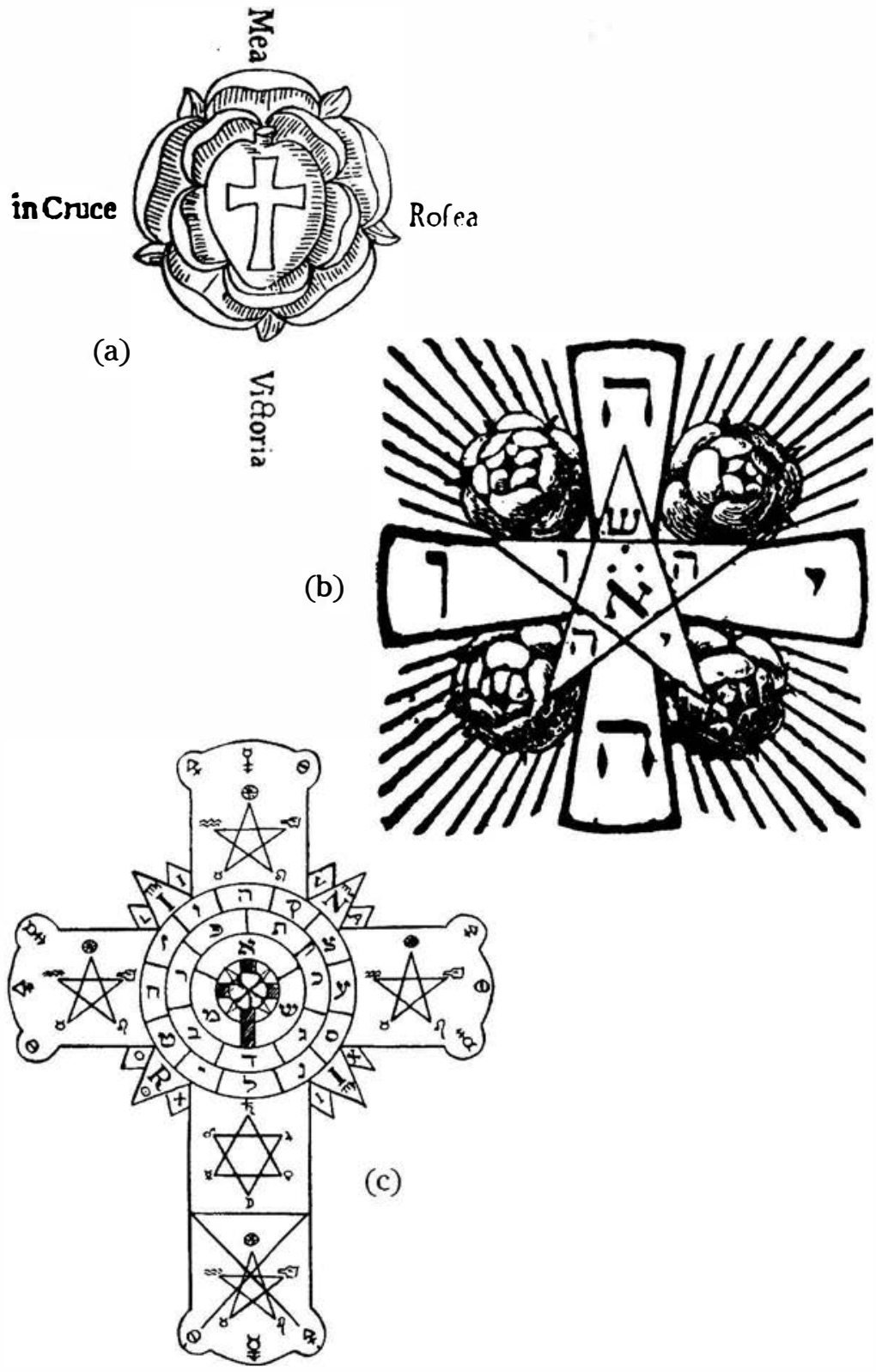


Figure 15. Variations of the rose cross motif: (a) emblem from the *Secret Symbols* (*photograph: Adam McLean*); (b) the symbol of de Guaita's Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross; (c) a drawing of the lamen used by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (from *The Golden Dawn* by Israel Regardie).

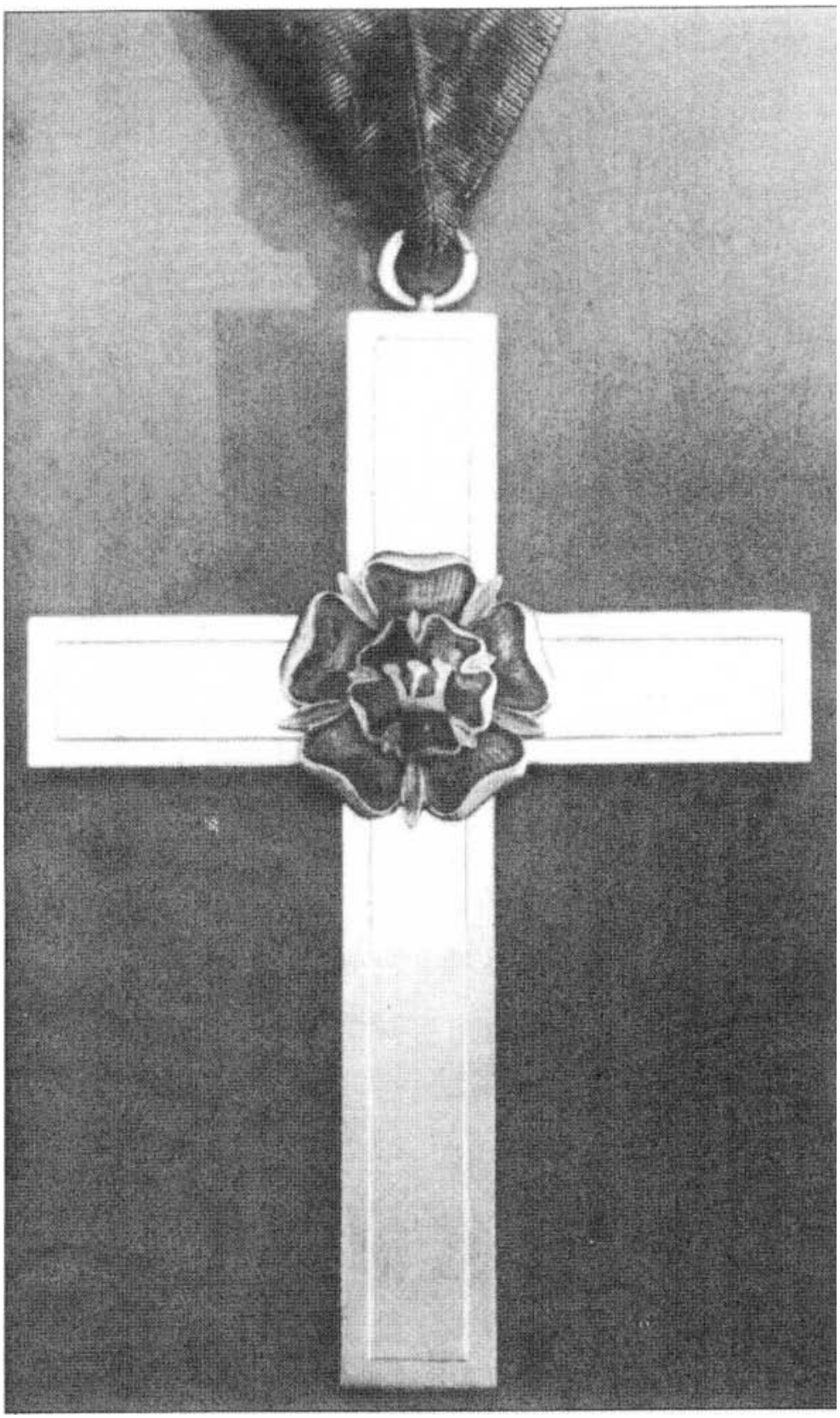
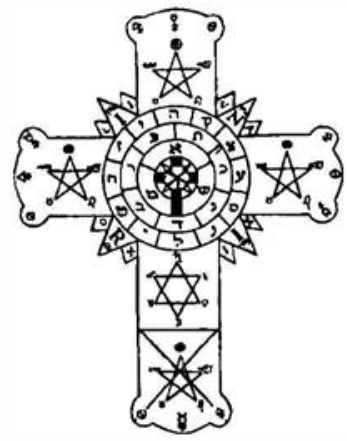


Figure 16. Lamen used by A. E. Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (*photograph: R. A. Gilbert*).



Chapter 2

The Esoteric Tradition in Germany

"Europe is with child and will bring forth a strong child, who shall stand in need of a great godfather's gift." So reads one of the prophetic utterances in the *Fama Fraternitatis*. And if Europe was to bring forth a child, there was no doubt that Germany was to be the womb, for in the 16th and 17th centuries, Germany was the great focal point in Europe of messianic and millenialist ideas. German thinkers had taken up the esoteric tradition revived by Italian scholars and created a German esotericism of special force, building on native mystical roots that had existed before the Italian influence was felt.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's great Arthurian poem *Parzival*, written in the 1190s, contains a number of features that are startlingly reminiscent of the story presented in the Rosicrucian manifestos over 400 years later. The brotherhood of knights described in the story, who guard the Holy Grail, live in a castle called Munsalvaesche, whose whereabouts are secret. This Grail brotherhood trains men and women for the service of humankind. The men go forth incognito, the women openly. The knights themselves are celibate, apart from the Grail King, who has the right to marry a woman chosen by God. The Grail which they guard is described by Wolfram as a "stone" left on earth by a host of angels, whose wondrous properties include the capacity to heal and rejuvenate.

This altruistic and idealistic brotherhood, with its celibate knights, its secret abode, and its incognito male emissaries, is paralleled by the Rosicrucian brotherhood described in the *Fama* and *Confessio*. Moreover, the description of the Grail as a stone reminds us of the passage in *The Chemical Wedding* which says: "At that time

the Virgin declared to us that we were Knights of the GOLDEN STONE."[1]

Another point of similarity lies in the many astrological references that exist in *Parzival* and in *The Chemical Wedding.* Flegetanis, the original author of the Grail story according to Wolfram, is said to have seen "with his own eyes in the constellations things he was shy to talk about, hidden mysteries. He said there was a thing called the Grail whose name he had read clearly in the constellations."[2] Later Cundrie, the sorceress, says to Parzival: "Whatever the planets' orbits bound, upon whatever their light is shed, that is destined as your goal to reach and achieve." Similarly, in *The Chemical Wedding* there are many references to planets and signs of the zodiac.

In a further striking parallel passage, Wolfram relates how, after the Grail had been taken away by maidens, "Parzival gazed after them and saw, before they closed the door behind them, on a couch in an outer room, the most beautiful old man he had ever beheld. I say it and do not exaggerate—he was greyer even than mist."[3] This is Titurel, the founder of the brotherhood, who remains in a kind of eternal mystical state between life and death, but able to communicate with the knights. In a similar way, the body of Christian Rosenkreuz, when found by his followers in the vault, was "whole and unconsumed."

The idea of a monarch or leader who is not dead but asleep and will one day awaken is a familiar one. It was applied not only to King Arthur, but also to such historical figures as Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa. In Rosicrucian legend, it is the brotherhood which reawakens, while its founder, although ostensibly dead, remains undecayed as a symbol of his abiding influence through his followers.

Another ingredient in the fertile German soil from which Rosicrucianism sprang was the work of a number of great contemplative mystics. One of the most outstanding of these was Meister (Johannes) Eckhart (c. 1260–1327), a member of the Dominican order who, in his writings and sermons, taught a mystical pantheism which caused him to be arraigned for heresy. Two years after his death, his works were condemned by Pope John XXII, but they continued to exercise an influence on later religious mysticism and speculative philosophy. Eckhart talked in terms of an "identity" with God. This became a point of dispute among his followers, especially between Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1360) and Johannes Ruys-

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[1] *The Chemical Wedding or The Hermetick Romance or the Chymical Wedding*, E. Foxcraft, trans. in *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, compiled and edited by Paul M. Allen (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), p. 154.

[2] I quote from the English translation of *Parzival* by Helen M. Mustard and Charles E. Passage (New York: Vintage Books, 1961) pp. 244, and 406–407.

[3] *Parzival*, p. 267.

broek (1293–1381). Tauler, whose writings later influenced Luther, agreed with Eckhart, whereas Ruysbroek preferred to think in terms of a "relationship" with God. Another follower of Eckhart was the Dominican Heinrich Suso (or Seuse), author of *Das Büchlein der ewigen Weisheit* [The Book of Eternal Wisdom].

The last great representative of medieval German mysticism was Nicolas of Cusa (c. 1401–1464), who became a cardinal and papal legate to Constantinople. In science, Cusa was ahead of his time and taught, for example, that the earth went around the sun. In his *Die Visione Dei* [Of the Vision of God], published in 1454, he compares the eyes of God to those of a face in a painting which, when observed by several observers at different angles, appear to be gazing directly at each one. He also taught the doctrine of the microcosm.

When the Hermetic-Qabalistic-Neoplatonic tradition reached Germany, therefore, it fell on ripe soil. One of the greatest German Hebraists and Qabalists was Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), from Pforzheim in the Black Forest. Reuchlin drew his knowledge of the Qabalah to a large extent from Pico della Mirandola and from two Jewish teachers, Obadiah Sforno and Jacob Loans. He also leaned heavily on the writings of Joseph ben Abraham Gikatila, a Spanish Qabalist who wrote at the end of the 13th century and taught that divine power emanates in a series of permutations of the holy name YHWH. Reuchlin's most influential Qabalistic work was his *De Arte Cabalistica* (1517). He also wrote a book on the Hebrew language, *Rudimenta Hebraica* (1506). Reuchlin's Hebrew sympathies provoked strong hostility from opponents of the Jews, especially from a fanatical convert from Judaism, Johannes Pfefferkorn. The humanists came to the aid of Reuchlin and attacked his clerical opponents in a series of satirical writings, thus striking an important blow against intolerance.

Another German, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1533), was one of the most influential figures in the whole history of occultism. Born at Cologne as Heinrich Cornelis, which he later Latinized to Cornelius, adding the name of the Roman founder of Cologne (the "von Nettesheim" refers to a place near Cologne), Agrippa passed most of his life as a soldier and envoy in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. He led a roving life during which he pursued wide-ranging scholarship and came into contact with many leading minds in different parts of Europe. He lectured on Reuchlin in Dole, stayed with the English philosopher Dean Colet in London, and worked as physician to Queen Louisa of Savoy. His outspokenness got him into trouble with the Church and with King François I who had him thrown into prison at Lyon. Shortly after his release, he died in poverty.

Agrippa was one of the main exponents of Ficino's Neoplatonic school of thought. This and other elements went into his main

work, *De Occulta Philosophia*, first published at Cologne in 1531. The work consisted of three parts, each part examining one of three realms: the elemental, the intellectual, and the celestial. The first contains a survey of natural magic, the second deals with number symbolism, and the third, which owes much to Reuchlin, treats of the divine names.

One of the things that brought Agrippa fame and notoriety was his defense of magic—defined as the wisdom of the Magi and not as the sorcery of the popular imagination. In his *De Occulta Philosophia*, he writes: "[a] Magician doth not amongst learned men, signify a sorcerer or one that is supersititious or devilish; but a wise man, a priest, a prophet; and that the Sybils were Magicianesses, and therefore prophesied most clearly of Christ; and that Magicians, as wise men, by the most wonderful secrets of the world, knew Christ, the author of the world, to be born, and came first of all to worship him; and that the name of Magic was received by philosophers, commended by divines, and is not unacceptable to the Gospel."[4]

Agrippa supported the idea of man as microcosm: "Seeing man is the most beautiful and perfectest work of God, and his image, and also the lesser world; therefore he by a more perfect composition, and sweet harmony, and more sublime dignity doth contain and maintain in himself all numbers, measures, weights, motions, elements, and all other things which are of his composition.[5]

The third book outlines a system of Christian Qabalism, discussing the Hebrew names of God, the sephiroth, the angelic hierarchies, and the heavenly spheres. Agrippa also treats of the areas of influence of the planets and the numerical values of the Hebrew letters and their Qabalistic meanings.

The next important figure in a chronological history of German esotericism is Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, better known as Paracelsus (1493–1541), alchemist, physician, and occult philosopher. He was born of Swabian ancestry at Einsiedeln in Switzerland and went to Basel University at age 16, where he studied alchemy and chemistry under Trithemius, Bishop of Würzburg. Trithemius, also an important figure in the esoteric tradition, was the author of a number of works on magic, alchemy, and prophecy. After leaving the university, Paracelsus learned about the properties of metals and minerals during a sojourn in the mountains of Tyrol. Subsequently, he pursued the life of a wandering physician, never remaining long in one place because his outspoken and ag-

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[4] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*. English translation first published in London (1651) by R. W. for Gregory Moule as *Occult Philosophy* (Reprinted: New York: Samuel Weiser, 1971 as *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic*), p. 25.

[5] Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Book II, Donald Tyson, ed. James Freake, trans. (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1993), p. 345.

gressive nature invariably aroused enmity. He acquired vast learning over many fields, and his extensive writings range over alchemy, cosmology, medicine, and mysticism.

In medicine, Paracelsus taught that the body and soul are joined and that the physician must therefore treat the two simultaneously and try to bring them into harmony. To live harmoniously, he maintained, is to live according to one's own true self. But since humans are microcosms of a larger reality, this self is conditioned by influences in the cosmos. Therefore, if the physician is to know a person thoroughly, he must be able to study the cosmic influences active upon him through astrology. He must also be a theologian to understand the needs of the soul, an alchemist to comprehend the inner workings of matter, and a mystic to know that there is a divine truth beyond reason. Paracelsus' impact on medical learning was immense. Among his practical achievements was the classification of miners' diseases, based on his experiences in the Tyrolean mines. He was also a pioneer of systematic laboratory techniques.

Paracelsus' thought was imbued with Ficinian, Hermetic, and Cabalistic ideas. "For the Qabalah," he wrote, "opens up access to the occult, to the mysteries; it enables us to read sealed epistles and books and likewise the inner nature of men. . . . For the Qabalah builds on a true foundation. Pray and it will be given to you, knock and you will be heard. . . . You will gain greater knowledge than Solomon."[6]

Paracelsus' writings had a great influence on the occult thinkers who followed him, among them Valentin Weigel (1533–1588), a Protestant pastor whose mystical writings brought him into disfavor with his co-religionists, and Aegidius Gutmann, or Gutman (1490–1584), author of *Offenbarung göttlicher Majestät* [The Revelation of Divine Majesty], which gives an esoteric interpretation of Genesis and stresses the spiritual side of alchemy.

Throughout European, and particularly German, history, religious and social upheavals have gone hand in hand. Thus the state of German and European society during the pre-Rosicrucian era and the attitudes of mind which it engendered played as important a role in shaping the Rosicrucian movement as did its intellectual background.

In his remarkable book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Professor Norman Cohn cites many examples of revolutionary sects and self-appointed messiahs who rebelled against the established religious and secular order and foreshadowed Luther's Reformation.[7] One of the most important pre-Lutheran Reformation movements was that of the Bohemian Brethren, followers of John Hus, or Huss

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[6] *Paracelsus: Selected Writings,* edited by Jolande Jacobi, Norbert Guterman, trans. Bollingen Series XXVIII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp.133–134.
[7] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Paladin, 1970).

(c. 1373–1415). Although its founder was burned for heresy, the Hussite movement continued to flourish in Bohemia right up to the Thirty Years' War and still has followers today.

It was not until Luther's time, however, that the Reformation became a widespread and serious challenge to the Roman Church. The revolution that began with Luther's nailing his ninety-five theses against the abuse of Indulgences to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg in 1517 led to a long and bitter series of conflicts between supporters of the old and new orders, conflicts which were usually bound up with the territorial ambitions of the princes. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 was an attempt to settle the dispute, but it brought only an incomplete and temporary respite. The period between this peace and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in 1618 was a time of continuing confrontation and skirmishing between Catholic and Protestant. The German world in particular, with its many principalities ranged on both sides of the issue, suffered dislocations.

One of the ways in which people often seek consolation in times of trouble is by believing that their sufferings are part of a pattern of history and that a new golden age is just around the corner. This notion was at the center of a complex of thought current during the post-Reformation period in Germany which has come to be called pansophism, from the Greek *pansophia*, meaning "universal knowledge." People who thought in this manner owed a great deal to the writings of the 12th-century Italian abbot and mystic, Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202), who invented a prophetic system which Norman Cohn calls "the most influential known to Europe until the appearance of Marxism."[8] After a long period spent in contemplating the scriptures, Joachim received an inspiration which seemed to reveal a predictive message contained in the Bible.

Joachim saw history as a process taking place in three successive ages, each presided over by one of the three persons of the Trinity. First came the Age of the Father, characterized by the rule of the Law; second came the Age of the Son, with the emphasis on the Gospel and on faith; and finally would come to the Age of the Holy Spirit or Paraclete, an age of love, joy, and freedom, when knowledge of God would be revealed directly in the hearts of all humankind. This idea continued to echo many centuries after Joachim's death. Joachim conceived of each age as lasting for forty-two generations, each generation consisting of thirty years. Since the Second Age began with the birth of Christ, it followed that the Third Age would begin in 1260. Meanwhile, the way must be paved for the advent of the new age, and this would be achieved by a new order of monks who would preach the gospel throughout the world. One of these would be a supreme teacher whose task it would be to teach the world to turn away from

[8] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium.*

earthly things and toward the things of the spirit. For three-and-a-half years before the Third Age finally came, however, there would be a period of purging carried out by the Antichrist, a secular king who would destroy the corrupt and worldly church to make room for the true church. The Antichrist, in his turn, would be overthrown and the Age of the Spirit would begin.

Around the beginning of the 17th century many people predicted that the time of the Antichrist was near. One of them was Heinrich Vogel, a Protestant pastor of Lützelstein, author of *Offenbarung der Geheymnissen der Alchimy* [Revelation of the Secrets of Alchemy], published in 1605. In this work, Vogel wrote that, when the Gospel and alchemy came forth again together, the Antichrist would be revealed and the Last Day would be near. An omen of this was the emergence of certain philosophers, such as Paracelsus, who brought alchemy out of the darkness and purified it.

There were also certain people who saw themselves as founders of Joachim's new order. Julius Sperber, who later became a Rosicrucian apologist, wrote, in his *Wunderbuch* [Book of Wonders], of a visionary dream in which he saw the words *nitorem ardentem deglutiam* ("I shall disgorge the glowing brightness"). On waking, he consulted the Scriptures and found the passage about the prophet Isaiah's mouth being touched by a seraph with a glowing coal, signifying that he was to go forth and prophesy. Will-Erich Peuckert summarizes Sperber's interpretation of this experience:

> The Third Age is approaching, whose beginning is concealed to the world, except for a few individuals. The most important evidence for this is that in the years between 1500 and 1600 the world has had the same aspect as in the century preceding the birth of Christ. And just as then only a few people were aware of the coming new age—such as the shepherds in the fields and the priest Zacharias—although it had been announcing itself for a long time, so the beginning of this new golden age is known only to a few. But those who can see are able to discern the signs. Everywhere changes are visible. Luther has reformed religion. Nicolaus Vigelius [Latinized from Vigel] has proposed a new legal system for the Roman Empire. In medicine Paracelsus had come forward 60 years previously. And in philosophy Ramus and Guillaume Postel have created a new system. Also in law there have been changes. A medical man, Johannes Wierus [Johann Wier, the well-known opponent of witchcraft persecution] has stood up and said that belief in witchcraft is foolishness.[9]

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[9] Will-Erich Peuckert, *Das Rosenkreuz* (Berlin, Erich Smchmidt Verlag, 1973). Translation mine.

Sperber goes on to describe the new age. The New Jerusalem will emerge, he claims, and a new religion will come into being, presided over by the Holy Spirit. Everyone's eyes will be opened, belief will grow strong and unbelief fade. The true, complete philosophy will be grounded on true theology. As the First Age was ruled by monarchy and the Second by aristocracy, so the Third Age will be one of democracy. The new medicine will be spagyric (that is, alchemical) and the seven liberal arts will flourish.

Sperber could also have mentioned other areas in which the world was undergoing profound change. Galileo had brought his telescope to bear on the surface of the moon; Copernicus had introduced the concept of the heliocentric planetary system; the Americas had been discovered; the globe had been circumnavigated. Everywhere a great expansion of horizons was taking place. In this atmosphere, there were those who sensed that humankind was facing an opportunity to create a different kind of vision, embracing both the wisdom of the past and the new perspectives that were opening up. This sense would be expressed in the opening paragraph of the *Fama*, which states that God has recently "made manifest unto us many wonderful, and never heretofore seen, works and creatures of Nature, and moreover hath raised men, imbued with great wisdom, who might partly renew and reduce all arts (in this our age spotted and imperfect) to perfection; so that man might thereby understand his own nobleness and worth."[10] Many ingredients, therefore, went into creating the expectation of a new age.

Joachim's crucial year of 1260 had, of course, to be revised, and opinions differed as to when the new age would begin. Adam Nachenmoser, in his *Prognosticum Theologicum* (1588), counted the 1260 years from the death of Constantine in 327, arriving at the year 1587 as the crucial moment. From then until 1600, he predicted, the "labor pains" would last, that is, the Antichrist would reign, but in 1600 the new age would be born. Nachenmoser, like Sperber, brings in the widespread idea that the Antichrist would be opposed by a "Third Elias" or "Third Elijah." At the end of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, the following verse occurs: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (King James: Malachi 4:5). John the Baptist was held to be the Second Elias. But the Third Age also had to have its Elias, and his identity was the subject of much speculation.

Paracelsus had also written about this theme. In chapter 8 of his *Buch von den Mineralien* [Book of Minerals], he says: "That which is of lesser importance God has already allowed to be revealed; but the more important is still in the dark and will remain so

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[10] *Fama Fraternitatis* in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 238.

until Elias the Artist comes."[11] This "Elias the Artist" was conceived of by Paracelsus as an adept of chemical science. This revealer, he said, would come fifty-eight years after his death. As Paracelsus died in 1541, that would mean that Elias would appear in 1599. But certain people argued that Paracelsus had, in fact, died in 1544. Hence 1603 became the crucial year. In the *Fama Fraternitatis*, one more year is added to the figure, and 1604 is given as the date when Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb was opened. But there is no doubt that Joachim's idea of a new order to prepare for the coming Third Age was in the mind of the author or authors of the *Fama*.

Perhaps the most important prophetic writer in relation to the Rosicrucian question was Simon Studion. This mystic and theosophist was born at Urach in Württemberg in 1543 and received his master's degree at Tübingen in 1565. Later, he worked as a tutor in Marbach and Ludwigsburg. He was, for a time, patronized by Friedrich, Duke of Württemberg, an enthusiastic promoter of occult studies, but Studion's unorthodox views brought him enemies who conspired to remove him from Friedrich's favor. His most important work, *Naometria*, never appeared in print, but must have been circulated widely in manuscript.

The word *naos* is Greek for "temple," and the title of the book means the measurement of the temple, that is to say, the inner and outer temple which represent holy writ and nature. In the work, Studion leans heavily on Joachim. According to Studion, the penultimate of Joachim's prophetic "generations" before the beginning of the new age lasted from 1560 to 1590. The next, therefore, extends to 1620. Moreover, the new age, as envisaged by Studion, would be designated by a cross. One of the many illustrations in the *Naometria* shows a female figure representing the new age riding forth on a creature made up of the four animals of Ezekiel's vision and carrying a banner with a cross on it. She rides on firm ground, while to the left the Pope and the Emperor cling to a ship foundering on rocks.

Studion identified Joachim's new order with an organization which he calls the Confederatio Militiae Evangelicae, a kind of Protestant alliance concluded at Lüneburg in 1586 between certain princes, electors, and representatives of the King of Navarre, the King of Denmark, and the Queen of England. Another of the participants was Friedrich, Duke of Württemberg, to whom the *Naometria* is dedicated and who is referred to as the crucifier of the final Pope. Whether such an alliance ever existed is open to doubt, but it is possible that the idea of it foreshadowed the notion of the Rosicrucian fraternity. I shall return later to the links between the *Naometria* and the Rosicrucian manifestos.

It is significant that the *Naometria* is dated 1604, for this was not only the supposed date of the opening of Christian Rosen-

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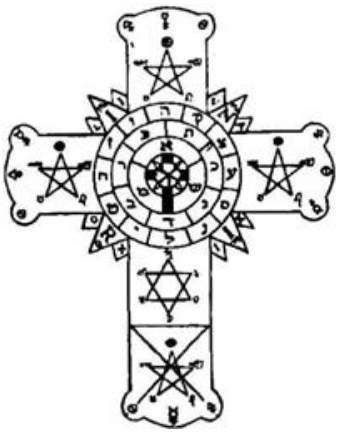
[11] Paracelsus, *Buch von den Mineralien*. Translation mine.

kreuz's tomb, but also a significant year astrologically. That year saw the appearance of two new stars in the constellations of Serpentarius and Cygnus. At the time when the new stars appeared, Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in the 9th house. As Jupiter was considered a good planet and Saturn a bad one, there was some speculation as to which was dominant. The general consensus, however, was that, as the 9th house is Jupiter's house and Jupiter rules Pisces, the sign which was in the ascendant at the time of observation, Jupiter, was the dominant planet. Both planets were also favorably placed, in relation to the other planets. When Saturn is well placed, it brings forth thoughtful, serious men.

The combination, therefore, promised the advent of a prophet or prophets who would be wise, just, and righteous. It was believed, moreover, that these astrological positions corresponded to the positions present at the Creation. According to tradition, the Sun first appeared on the fourth day of Creation when Aries was in the ascendant. From this it followed that Sagittarius must have been in the 9th house.

Thus, the signs at the appearance of the new stars in 1604 were the same as those for the beginning of the world, proving that 1604 would also see a great new beginning. In the Rosicrucian context, this new beginning meant the opening of Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb and the issuing forth of his message.

These key issues and intellectual currents which lay behind the emergence of the Rosicrucian movement help to explain both the excitement with which the movement was greeted in some quarters and the vehemence with which it was opposed in others.



Chapter 3

The Tübingen Circle

The opening of Christian Rosenkreuz's tomb, whether an actual event or a symbolic movement, sent forth a specter that was to haunt Europe almost as persistently as would the specter of Communism two-and-a-half centuries later. The Rosicrucian specter, however, was a more elusive creature. Though many people claimed to have seen and even communicated with it, no one could give a very intelligible account of what it looked like. Nor was it clear whether it was an independent entity or whether someone had conjured it up. There are a number of possibilities for the identity of such a conjurer, but the most likely candidate is Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), a learned Protestant pastor from Tübingen, who claimed in his autobiography to have written *The Chemical Wedding* and was also possibly the author or co-author of the *Fama*. Whether or not Andreae actually created the Rosicrucian legend, he was certainly closely involved with it. It is important, therefore, to know something of the character and career of this curious man.

Andreae's grandfather, Jacob Andreae, was a Protestant convert from Catholicism and one of the leading pioneers of Protestantism. He was known as the "Württemberg Luther." He had a distinguished career and, by the time of his death, was Chancellor of the University of Tübingen. Jacob Andreae had eighteen children, the seventh of whom, Johann Andreae, also became a Lutheran pastor. Johann lacked the gifts of his father, but had a strong interest in alchemy.

Johann Andreae's son, Johann Valentin Andreae, was brought up in an atmosphere in which alchemy featured prominently. His tutors were chosen less for their academic abilities than for their alchemical leanings, and the young Johann Valentin must have become thoroughly familiar with the language of alchemy, as well as seeing some

of the charlatanism that often went with it. His early exposure to alchemical imposters would account for the invective against false alchemists in the Rosicrucian writings.

Johann Valentin Andreae's delicate health prevented him from taking part in the usual children's games, and he grew up a dreamy, quiet, and inward-looking child. In 1591, the family moved from his birthplace, Herrenberg, to Königsbronn. In 1601 when Andreae's father died, mother and children moved to Tübingen, then as now an attractive university town on the River Neckar. Shortly afterward, Andreae entered the university. His mother, being a resourceful woman, became court apothecary to Frederick I, Duke of Württemberg.

At about the time that Andreae entered Tübingen University, the close ties that had until then existed between Protestant Tübingen and Catholic Austria were being dissolved in the new counter-Reformation spirit encouraged by the reactionary Emperor Frederick II. Austrian students no longer went freely to Tübingen as they had done under the reign of the tolerant and occult-minded Emperor Rudolf II, whose court was at Prague. The effects of religious intolerance were therefore forcefully impressed on the mind of the young Andreae. Having taken his bachelor's degree in 1603 and his master's in 1604, Andreae began to earn his living by teaching a few pupils. At the same time, he pursued a wide range of studies including theology, mathematics, optics, and astronomy.

Andreae enjoyed the company of a learned and idealistic circle of friends, one of the most prominent of whom was Christoph Besold, a man of wide leaning who knew nine languages including Hebrew and was interested in the Qabalah. Besold, who later converted to Catholicism, had strong mystical leanings, and the territories of his knowledge bear a close relationship to the contents of the Rosicrucian writings.

In 1614, Andreae became a deacon at Vaihingen, married, and settled down to the life of a respectable Lutheran pastor and theologian. He wrote prolifically, his most important work probably being *Christianopolis*, in which he describes a utopian Christian state. In several of his writings, he refers to the Rosicrucian furor. In *Turris Babel* (1619), for example, he writes scathingly of the movement and tells his readers: "Listen ye mortals, in vain do you wait for the coming of the Brotherhood, the Comedy is at an end."[1]

What part did Andreae play in the rise of Rosicrucianism? And how did the manifestos and *The Chemical Wedding* come to be written and published? To answer these questions, you must resort to

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[1] Johann Valentin Andreae, *Turris Babel* (1619). From a note in *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, compiled and edited by Pual M. Allen (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), see "A Catalog of Rosicrucian Books," compiled by F. Leigh Gardner (London: 1923), p. 604.

informed guess-work. Imagine a group of intelligent, well-read, and idealistic men meeting in Tübingen around 1608. The young Andreae, 22 years old, listens solemnly and attentively while his older mentor, Christoph Besold, holds forth, sketching his vision of a Europe free of religious dissension and basking in the light of the true Christian faith combined with science and learning. Besold illumines what he is saying by constant quotations from the classics and by startling comparisons between Christian doctrine and the Qabalah. Among the members of the circle are Abraham Hölzel, a young Austrian friend of Andreae, and the Tübingen Paracelsian doctor Tobias Hess, who had cured Andreae of a fever. Recent research by Carlos Gilly and others has revealed Hess as a key figure in the story. The meetings of the circle were often hosted by him, and it was from his house that one of the earliest manuscripts of the *Fama* was sent out into the world.

This circle also included two other friends of Andreae, Tobias Adami and Wilhelm Wense. These last two were disciples of the Italian friar, Tommaso Campanella, author of a utopian work, *City of the Sun*, which describes an ideal society ruled over by Hermetic priests. Adami and Wense introduced Andreae to this work, and its utopian thinking helped to create the atmosphere in which the Rosicrucian manifestos were produced.

The other main theme of the Rosicrucian manifestos, that of the secret society of initiates, no doubt drew its inspiration partly from German medieval brotherhoods and knightly orders, as mentioned earlier, but also from the Florentine academies. It is important to understand that, in Germany, there was developing at this time a strong tendency to form secret or quasi-secret societies which were very often closely linked to a burgeoning German nationalism. This can be seen in the various societies that were created for the purpose of promoting the German language, in which Germans were beginning to take a new pride.

The first of these societies was the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft (the Fruit-bringing Society), founded in 1617 by Prince Ludwig of Anhalt. It is fascinating to discover that both Andreae and Adami were among the early members.[2] The Fruchtbringende gesellschaft was based on a Florentine society whose members had each borne a special name associated with the business of grinding or baking. In a similar way, the members of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft assumed names mostly connected with the "fructifying" aim of the society. Prince Ludwig, for example, was *der Nährende* (the Nourisher); other names were *der Helffende* (the Helper), *der Unverdrossene* (the Indefatigable), *der Nutzbare* (the Productive), *der Vielgekörnte* (the Many-grained), and *der Grade* (the Straight).

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[2] *Die Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft: Quellen und Dokumente in vier Bänden*, Vol. 1, edited by Martin Bircher (Munich: Kosel Verlag, 1971).

Each member had a coat of arms corresponding to his own designation, and the arms of the society showed a coconut palm with the motto *Alles zu Nutzen* (Everything for Usefulness). The society later came to be called *die Gesellschaft des Palmenordens* (The Society of the Order of the Palm).

The organization which bears the closest family resemblance to the Rosicrucian brotherhood, however, and which may have been the most direct model for it, was a society called the Orden der Unzertrennlichen, or Indissolubilisten (the Order of the Inseparables), which was founded in 1577 and later became linked with the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft. Documents relating to this society were held in the archives of the Masonic lodge Zur Freundschaft in Berlin and that of Archimedes in Altenburg until they were dissolved by the Nazis. The contents of the documents, however, are recorded elsewhere, and Karl Frick summarizes them in his book, *Die Erleuchteten.*[3]

The founders of this order included the owners of mines and smelting works. Alchemy and smelting technology were among its chief concerns. The results of successful alchemical experiments were recorded and placed in an "Archa," a secret chest whose contents were continually augmented. There is a striking echo of the description in the *Fama* of Christian Rosenkreuz's vault, which had in each wall "a door or chest, wherein there lay divers things, especially all our books."[4] The order is also said to have used a secret alphabet containing many alchemical symbols—another Rosicrucian echo, for in the *Fama* the four founders of the Rosicrucian brotherhood are described as making "the Magical Language and writing."

The members of the Unzertrennlichen were divided into five grades, of which the fourth was devoted to alchemical work. This might appear to conflict with the spirit of the *Fama*, which talks of "ungodly and accursed gold-making, whereby under colour of it many runagates and roguish people do use great villainies, and cozen and abuse the credit which is given them." The "true philosophers," the *Fama* goes on, "are far of another mind, esteeming little the making of gold, which is but a *parergon*; for besides that they have a thousand better things."[5] In describing gold making as a "parergon," that is, a secondary or subsidiary work, the *Fama* seems to indicate that the brethren were capable of making gold, but that they saw the higher, or spiritual, alchemy as more important.

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[3] Karl R. H. Frick, *Die Erleuchteten* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1973)
[4] *Fama Fraternitatis* in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 250.
[5] Fama again.

All this seems to indicate that there was a connection between the Unzertrennlichen and the Rosicrucian brotherhood, and it is tempting to speculate that there might be clues here to explain the mystery of the brotherhood's origins. One curious piece of evidence may be relevant. In the Württemberg State Library in Stuttgart, there is a Rosicrucian alchemical manuscript which, to all appearances, is an 18th-century document of the so-called Gold- und Rosenkreuz (Golden and Rosy Cross) order. Yet the title page bears the date 1580. It is just possible that this could have been copied from a manuscript of the Unzertrennlichen. This encourages speculation that the Rosicrucian brotherhood might have sprung from the Unzertrennlichen. The connection between the two orders reappears later, as I shall mention in a subsequent chapter.

Andreae was a member of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft. He might easily, therefore, have been a member of the Unzertrennlichen. After he and his circle had decided that a "general reformation" of the world was necessary, they might have decided to create an inner order, or possibly a completely imaginary order, based on the Unzertrennlichen. In either case, they could have given their order a fictitious history to fit in with the Joachite and pansophic prophetic tradition. To see how this might have worked, look more closely at the background to the Tübingen circle.

In the milieu that produced the manifestos, utopian thinking and a predilection for esoteric societies went hand in hand. In discussing how to promote a better society, the Tübingen group drew largely on pansophic ideas and looked toward other people of pansophic persuasion for the implementation of their ideals. But they realized that, to start the process, a catalyst was necessary in the form of some powerful mystique. The Protestant parts of Germany had already turned away from the corruption of Rome, but they had failed to find in Lutheranism any satisfying replacement for the Catholic symbolism that they had lost. It was therefore necessary to find some new and satisfying symbology which could be linked to utopian ideas and whose force would be increased by being shrouded in mystery.

The members of the group would have been in the habit of circulating their writings among themselves, and one of the documents they probably discussed was Andreae's imaginative fantasy *The Chemical Wedding*, which he claimed in his autobiography, *Vita ab Ipso Conscripta*, to have written around 1605 when he was a young man of nineteen. It is possible that, in rereading *The Chemical Wedding*, Andreae and his friends hit on the idea of taking the narrator, Christian Rosenkreuz, and making him the mythical originator of a brotherhood named after himself, whose aims and doctrines would incorporate all the main ideas, ideals, and predictive theories of the pansophists. By issuing "manifestos" of this brotherhood, they would be able to influence people all over Europe who spoke the same symbolic language.

But why, then, did they remain silent to those who applied to join their brotherhood? Perhaps, in fact, they did reply to a chosen few, but their replies went unrecorded. Or perhaps they never intended to reply, but merely to act as a catalyst on the thought of their time. Certainly their silence helped to intensify the mystery around Rosicrucianism and contributed to the extraordinary vitality which it still possesses. A mystery is a powerful magnet, as becomes clear in examining the later history of the movement.

Andreae's intentions regarding the *Fama* remain somewhat unclear, and it seems that he was unwilling to publish it. However, copies of the manuscript, possibly originating with the one released by Hess, were circulating from as early as 1610. Textual differences between the handwritten versions suggest that it was avidly copied and recopied. One of these manuscripts fell into the hands of Adam Haslmayr, a notary public to the Archduke Maximilian of Tyrol as well as an alchemist, translator of alchemical works, and practitioner of Paracelsian medicine. Haslmayr in turn, through his alchemist friend, Carl Widemann, passed the manuscript on to Prince August of Anhalt, together with an enthusiastic *Reply to the Brotherhood* which Haslmayr had written. Anhalt, a kindred spirit, had Haslmayr's reply published in 1612—making it the earliest known printed reference to the Rosicrucian brotherhood.

The publication of this reply stirred up Haslmayr's enemies. Already unpopular with the traditional medical establishment in Tyrol because of his Paracelsian views, he was denounced to the Archduke by the Jesuits, arrested, and sent to Genoa to begin a period of grim penal servitude on the galleys, from which he was finally released in 1617. Returning to Germany, he entered enthusiastically into the Rosicrucian furor.

Before Haslmayr's imprisonment, he had been visited by a curious adventurer and alchemist called Benedictus Figulus, who also knew Hess and Andreae. Figulus evidently made a copy of Haslmayr's manuscript of the *Fama*, which he carried north to the Duchy of Hesse, where the first edition of it was published at Kassel, probably with the explicit approval of the Landgraf Moritz. When Andreae heard about the publication, he apparently was not pleased and later described Figulus as a "deceiver and vagabond."[6]

Thus, even before the publication of the *Fama*, the Rosicrucian furor was already starting, a furor that reflected a profound clash of world views. On the one hand were those who supported the new age vision and all that it embraced, from Paracelsian medicine to a

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[6] Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*. Catalog of the exhibition of the Rosicrucian manuscripts and books from the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, and the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel (Amsterdam: Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 1995), p. 70. Gilly's text to the catalog gives a fascinating account of the bibliographical history of the Rosicrucian writings and their manuscript antecedents.

reformed Christianity; on the other were those who upheld the traditional order.

As you look at the content of the *Fama* and *Confessio* in greater detail, bear in mind that you cannot understand them fully if you examine them only through the eyes of the historian. It is necessary also to look at their mythic dimension, a dimension which the psychologist C. G. Jung called a function of the "collective unconscious." On this level, ideas are stored and transmitted in a way that is not yet fully understood. Yet all mythology is linked to this realm, as is all great literature, poetry, drama, and art. The collective unconscious speaks with a universally shared vocabulary of images, themes, and mythical motifs.

The *Fama* and the *Confessio* give an account of a man called Christian Rosenkreuz who traveled around the Middle East collecting occult knowledge, returned to Germany to set up a secret brotherhood, and lived to be 106 years old. Here, straight away, is a universal mythical motif. Christian Rosenkreuz's itinerary is the "hero's journey" that Joseph Campbell writes about in his book of the same name—the initiatory journey from which the traveler returns transformed and possessed of new knowledge.[7]

A hundred and twenty years after Rosenkreuz's burial, the text relates, his vault was discovered by one of the brethren, and this was the signal for the fraternity to declare itself and invite the learned of Europe to join. Again, the image of the vault is one found in many traditions. It occurs, for example, in a book called *The Aim of the Sage*, which was circulated among a Middle-Eastern Sufi sect called the Ihwan al Saafa (the Pure Brethren), which would have been active around the time that Christian Rosenkreuz was supposed to have made his journey to that region. Henry Corbin, in his book, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, quotes the following passage from this text:

> When I wished to bring to light the science of the mystery and nature of Creation, I came upon a subterranean vault full of darkness and winds. I could see nothing because of the darkness, nor could I keep my lamp alight because of the many winds. Then a person appeared to me in my sleep in a form of the greatest beauty. He said to me: "Take a lamp and place it under a glass to shield it from the winds: then it will give thee light in spite of them. Then go into the vault; dig in its center and from there bring forth a certain talismanic image, artfully made. When you have drawn out this image, the winds will cease to blow through the vault. Then dig in its four corners and you will bring to

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[7] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on his Life & Work* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

> light the knowledge of the mysteries of Creation, the causes of Nature, the origins and qualities of things." At that I said to him: "Who art thou?" He replied: "I am thy Perfect Nature. If thou wishest to see me, call me by my name."[8]

The Aim of the Sage was translated into Latin in the 13th century under the title of the *Picatrix*, a book widely circulated in Europe as a magical grimoire. It is tempting to speculate that Andreae and his circle may have known this text. But it is equally possible that, in both cases, the motif of the vault came out of a shared store of mythical images.

The brethren held the keys to secret knowledge which would miraculously transform society and bring about a new era in which, to quote the *Confessio*, "the world shall awake out of her heavy and drowsy sleep, and with an open heart, bare-head, and bare-foot, shall merrily and joyfully meet the new arising Sun."[9] This is clearly a reference to the Joachite idea of the coming golden age, which played such a prominent part in the prophetic doctrines discussed in the previous chapter. But other references make it quite clear that the authors of the manifestos are speaking with a German voice, and that the initial transformation is envisaged as taking place on German soil. Therefore, it is not surprising that the manifestos came out of the same milieu as the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft.

The story of Christian Rosenkreuz is told, not in vague terms, but with an abundance of interesting detail. He is said, for example, to have set out for Jerusalem with a companion who died in Cyprus. The account also makes the special point that Paracelsus was not a member of the fraternity, though he was working in the same spirit. Another curious detail is that, among the early members of the fraternity who are identified by their initials, all were Germans except for "J. A."

There were at the time many Paracelsian physicians working in Germany. Indeed, nearly every princely court employed one. These men, steeped in alchemy, had often been on journeys to the Middle East and other places to extend their knowledge, and it is possible that Christian Rosenkreuz was modeled on one of these. The name, however, is undoubtedly imaginary, incorporating a play on the rose-and-cross motif of Andreae's coat of arms, with the word "Christian," which indicates the religious standpoint of the manifestos. Other details in the manifestos are also clearly imaginary, such as the discovery of the vault with its artificial sun.

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[8] "The Aim of the Sage" in Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, N. Pearson, trans. (Boston: Shambhala, 1981).

[9] *Confessio Fraternitatis* in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 257.

The Tübingen circle from which the manifestos emerged was composed of men who desired and anticipated the golden age foreseen by Joachim of Fiore. They saw this golden age as being ushered in initially on German soil and under the banner of Protestantism, but a new and reinvigorated Protestantism. They also believed that the men who would prepare the new age would be men of learning, illumined by the hidden light of Hermetic wisdom, but not deceived by false alchemists and other tricksters. The manifestos can therefore be seen as a kind of parable intended to inspire those who understood the symbolic language in which they were written and to stimulate the uninitiated to set out in search of true wisdom.

The language of the manifestos reflects in many ways that of the *Naometria*. In the *Confessio*, for example, it is stated that the Pope "shall be scratched to pieces with nails, and an end be made of his ass's cry, by a new voice of a roaring lion." Chapter 10 tells the reader: "We must also let you understand that there are some Eagle's Feathers in our way, the which do hinder us."[10] A possible explanation for the references to the lion and the eagle's feathers is found in Simon Studion's drawing of "The Mystical Jerusalem and City of the Sun, or Temple of God." Here the four creatures of Ezekiel's vision are depicted on the four walls of the symbolic Jerusalem. This seems to be a modification of Joachim's threefold plan. Each wall appears to represent one of four epochs, and the tops and bottoms of these walls, as well as the pillars in between, are divided into sections representing sub-divisions of the epochs. Studion calls these subdivisions "hours," each one divided into ninety years. The last date shown at the bottom of the column marking the right-hand edge of the eagle's wall is 1620. This means that Studion saw the year 1620 as marking the end of the reign of the eagle and the beginning of the reign of the lion. (Figure 1, insert between pp. 8–9.)

It is possibly no coincidence that 1620 was a fateful year in German history. It was the year when the Protestant monarch, Frederick V of the Palatinate, whose heraldic animal was the lion, accepted the Bohemian throne in defiance of the Catholic Hapsburgs. He may have done so in the belief that he was stepping into the new age. But the result was the defeat of Frederick at the Battle of the White Mountain and a bad reversal for the Protestant cause in Europe.

The symbolic creatures of Ezekiel also appear in *The Chemical Wedding*, in the description of the fifth day. The narrator is taken to an underground treasury where he sees a "little altar . . . supported by . . . an *Eagle*, an *Ox* and a *Lyon*, which stood on an exceeding costly Base."[11] A figure of an angel on the altar completes the qua-

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[10] *Confessio Fraternitatis* in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, pp. 255, 257. "The new voice of the roaring lion" is footnoted here as being part of the Frankfurt, 1617 edition, according to Pryce.

[11] *The Chemical Wedding*, E. Foxcraft, trans., in Paul M. Allen, *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), p. 130.

ternary. Other points of similarity exist between the Rosicrucian documents and the *Naometria*. In the *Fama*, it is stated that the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz lay closed for 120 years, and in the *Naometria* the figure 120 is given special significance.

It is also important to mention the documents which were printed and bound with the first edition of the *Fama* and *Confessio*. When the *Fama* first appeared in 1614, it was accompanied in the same volume by a work titled *Allgemeine und General Reformation, der gantzen weiten Welt* [The Universal and General Reformation of the Whole Wide World]. This is an extract from the Italian author Trajano Boccalini's allegorical satire, *Ragguagli di Parnasso* [News from Parnassus]. In this work, Boccalini imagines a number of historical and contemporary characters presenting complaints about the state of things to Apollo on Parnassus. The author, though a Catholic, makes it clear that he is strongly in favor of religious toleration and, interestingly, he shows the same admiration for Henry IV of France, formerly Henry of Navarre, that Simon Studion had shown.

In the extract from Boccalini's work printed with the *Fama*, a scene is described in which Apollo takes counsel from his wise men on how best to start a general reformation of the world. One by one, however, all suggestions are shown to be vain, and the attempt to find a formula for reformation is finally abandoned. One of the wise men, Solon, remarks that what the world needs is not so much reform of society as more human love, charity, and affection.

It was probably Andreae's friends Wense and Adami who brought Boccalini's work back from Italy, and it may have been they who suggested that it be published with the *Fama*. Whoever prepared the *Fama* for publication may have reasoned that, by issuing it together with the *General Reformation*, he could make the point that an inner reformation within men's minds and hearts must precede any external reformation and that the account given in the *Fama* had to be seen in this light.

Another important document included in the first printed edition of the *Fama* was Adam Haslmayr's *Reply*, which had already been published in 1612. There is also a preface in this volume referring to Haslmayr:

> And if some have held that what follows and is published of the Fraternity of the Rosenkreutz is a mere philosophical Exercise and no true history, others again will say, "The Jesuits will hunt down someone for this"; even as happened to Adam Haslmayr, *Publicus Notarius* to his Serene Highness Archduke Maximilian, whose answer to the Fraternity of the R.C. is printed herewith, not without Cause. And because this Haslmayr said, "Come then, O come, you Highly-illuminated Men, come you dear true

> Souls, you undeceiving Jesuits"; so conclude the Jesuits, "Now then, be the Fratres of the R.C. the undeceiving Jesuits, so follows it that we are the deceiving Jesuits"; and those angry Jesuits had this Christian Haslmayr seized by the head and put in irons on the Galleys.[12]

Haslmayr's letter is extremely interesting, as he sees the Rosicrucian brotherhood as fulfilling certain prophecies, such as the coming of "Elias the Artist" which I mentioned in the last chapter, and as spreading the true teaching of Paracelsus. In other words, the letter underlines the role of Rosicrucianism in the pansophic tradition.

The first edition of the *Confessio*, published in 1615, contained a text by one Philip a Gabella titled *A Brief Consideration of the More Secret Philosophy*, which was closely based on the *Monas Hieroglyphica* by the English magus, John Dee. *Monas Hieroglyphica* dealt with the mystical and scientific properties of the monad sign, which resembles the symbol for the planet Mercury. Gabella, who substitutes the word "stella" for "monas," quotes extensively from Dee's work. The monad symbol also occurs near the beginning of *The Chemical Wedding*. Dee, who combined the characteristics of scientist, Hermetic magus, and upholder of religious toleration, was the kind of person who, in the Rosicrucian view, would form the leadership of the new era. Frances Yates, in her book *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, has argued that Dee's influence lies behind the manifestos. Her claims about Dee's role appear exaggerated, however, in the light of recent scholarship.[13]

By the time the *Confessio* appeared, Andreae was well established in his pastoral post at Vaihingen. He had also by this time given up any ideas he may have had about taking an active part in social reform. As for the Rosicrucian manifestos, he probably disapproved of their publication, but hoped that they would at least be interpreted in a symbolic way.

Despite the inclusion of Boccalini's satire with the *Fama*, however, people were still inclined to take the Rosicrucian brotherhood literally. Andreae may, therefore, have decided in 1616 that the time was ripe for the publication of a work that would finally establish the mythological character of the Rosicrucian story. He therefore issued anonymously *The Chemical Wedding* and so came full circle. The work which had originally inspired the idea of a Rosicrucian fraternity was now published to show that the fraternity was a myth. (This, of course, is speculation, but it would provide a plausible explanation for his publishing the work after such a long interval.) The reading public, however, continued to believe that an

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[12] *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R:C:*, edited and introduced by F. N. Pryce (Privately published, 1923). Quoted from pp. 32–33 of Pryce's introduction.
[13] See, for example, Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, p. 22.

actual Rosicrucian brotherhood existed, and finally Andreae was obliged to put things in plain language. When he writes, in *Turris Babel*, "In vain do you wait for the coming of the Brotherhood," it is his way of telling people that they have misunderstood the message of the manifestos and that the fraternity described is to be seen instead as one of the mind and spirit.

Andreae's part in the whole Rosicrucian affair is still surrounded by doubt. I have given one possible account of his involvement. A totally different conclusion is reached by John Warwick Montgomery in his fascinating study of Andreae, *Cross and Crucible* (1973).[14] Writing from the view point of a Protestant theologian, Montgomery claims that Andreae was hostile to Rosicrucianism all along and wrote *The Chemical Wedding* to "Christianize" the figure of Rosenkreuz. Montgomery does, however, throw some valuable light on the part played by Andreae's friend, Tobias Hess, a Paracelsian and fervent disciple of Simon Studion. It may have been Hess, rather than Andreae, who was the chief architect of the manifestos. Whatever the truth of the matter, the continuing mystery of Andreae's role is part of the enigma on which Rosicrucianism has thrived.

It has commonly been thought that the first phase of the Rosicrucian brotherhood ended soon after the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in 1618 and that later Rosicrucian movements were artificial revivals which started completely afresh. If, however, you accept the connection between the Rosicrucian order and the Unzertrennlichen, the possibility of a continuous Rosicrucian activity carrying on right through the 17th century and linking up with the 18th-century Rosicrucians becomes real. In 1680, a lodge of the Unzertrennlichen was founded at Halle under the name of Sincera Confoederatio. This lodge recruited many members from among the academics of Halle University. At the same time it was joined by two other similar societies in the town, the Sincera Fraternitatis and the Reverenda Confoederatio. This Halle milieu was to play an important part in the second phase of Rosicrucianism. Meanwhile, however, a thick accretion of mythology was growing up around the Rosicrucian movement, both in Germany and abroad.

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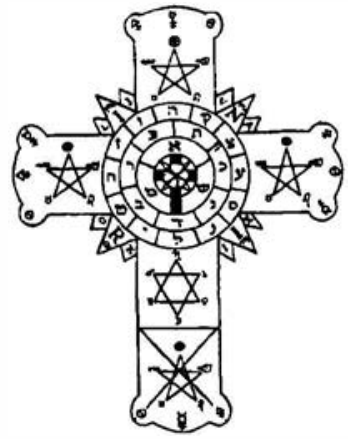
[14] John Warwick Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).



Chapter 4

The Aftermath of the Manifestos

The Rosicrucian idea, as presented in the *Fama* and *Confessio*, can be seen as an embryo which, in the years immediately following the publication of the manifestos, began to grow and develop surprising traits. The way in which this organism evolved into its mature form was determined to a large extent by those who leapt to the defense of the brotherhood in the furor that followed the appearance of the manifestos.

This furor took the form of a series of written polemics both attacking and defending the brotherhood. The defenders were, without exception, Protestant, as might be expected from the anti-Papal tone of the *Fama*. But, surprisingly enough, the attackers were also mostly Protestant. In fact, only two Catholics came out in print against the brethren. One was the anonymous author of *Einwurff und Schreiben auf der Wüdigen Brüderschafft dess Rosen-Creutzes ausgegangene Fama, Confessio und Reformation* [Objection to the Fama, Confessio and Reformation, issuing from the worthy Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross], which was published at Frankfurt in 1617. The other was S. Mundus Christophori, author of *Speck auff der Fall* [Bacon in the Trap], published at Ingolstadt, in 1618, and *Rosae Crucis Thrasonico-Mendax* (1619).

This is an important point, as it shows that the Catholics appeared to be relatively indifferent toward the movement. The fact that two of them attacked it, however, does make it seem unlikely that the Rosicrucian brotherhood was a Catholic order in disguise, as has been suggested by certain authors. Nevertheless, it is likely that some Catholics, such as the convert Besold, were sympathetic toward the broad aims and ideals of the movement.

The striking thing about the pro-Rosicrucian faction is the way in which it began to transform the Rosicrucian idea and to intro-

duce new elements. In the hands of Julius Sperber, for example, author of *Echo der von Gott hocherleuchteten Fraternitet* [Echo of the God-illuminated Fraternity], (Danzig, 1615), the wisdom handed down by Christian Rosenkreuz becomes an ancient secret doctrine dating back to the earliest biblical times. After the Fall, Sperber maintains, Adam retained in his memory something of the godly wisdom that he had known previously. This wisdom was incorporated in a teaching which, by way of Noah and the patriarchs, was passed down to Zoroaster, the Chaldeans, the Persians, and the Egyptians, and was preserved in the Jewish Qabalah. A new epoch began with Christ, who showed all men the way to eternal bliss, but reserved for the chosen few the knowledge of the way to divine wisdom. Later this wisdom was almost lost, except in heathen lands; but a few, very few, Christians found it. They include, according to Sperber, Cornelius Agrippa, Johannes Reuchlin, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Aegidius Gutmann. Sperber sees the Rosicrucians as heirs to this wisdom.

Another new element that began to come into Rosicrucianism at this time was a preoccupation with alchemy. The *Fama*, it is true, mentions alchemy and attacks false gold-makers; *The Chemical Wedding* is full of alchemical imagery. Nevertheless, alchemy was not an integral part of the original Rosicrucianism. Some of the Rosicrucian apologists now began to claim the secret of transmutation as a possession of the brotherhood. Others advanced the idea that the transmutation was spiritual and not physical. One author who adopted the latter position in his *Sendbrieff* [circular letter] (Frankfurt, 1615) was Julianus de Campis. De Campis (who was probably Sperber writing under a pseudonym) states: "our material is of the spirit and not of the body."[1] He also claimed that he himself belonged to the brotherhood.

The same point of view regarding alchemy is expressed by Radtichs Brotoffer (a pseudonym for Christoph Rodtbart), author of *Elucidarius Major* (Lüneberg, 1617), who claimed that the *Fama*, the *Confessio*, and *The Chemical Wedding* were allegorical alchemical writings. He quotes a passage in *The Chemical Wedding* which names the search for gold as a cause of the ills of the world; he interprets this as meaning that the Philosopher's Stone is not to be found in metal.

One man, above all, was responsible for putting an alchemical stamp on Rosicrucianism. This was Michael Maier (1568–1622), the most prominent alchemical physician in Germany since Paracelsus. Maier was born at Rendsburg in Holstein and, after graduating in medicine from Rostock, went to Prague and entered the service of the Emperor Rudolf II, who engaged him as his personal doctor. After Rudolf's death in 1612, Maier visited England where he met,

[1] Julianus de Campis, *Sendbrieff* (Frankfurt, 1615).

among others, Sir William Paddy, who was physician to James I and to whom he dedicated his book *Arcana Arcanissima*. It is also highly likely that he met the alchemist and Hermetic philosopher, Robert Fludd.

Maier may also have met King James himself. Certainly he was in touch with the King, as is proven by a very curious document which appears to link James with the Rosicrucian brotherhood. This document, which is now in the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh,[2] is a message of Christmas greetings sent by Maier to James in 1612. It is on a piece of parchment about three feet by two, covered with fragments of verse and messages of adulation, and must surely be one of the earliest and largest Christmas cards in existence. What makes it remarkable in the present context, however, is the fact that, in the center of the parchment, is a rose with eight petals forming the focal point of the whole arrangement. The stem and the base on which it rests are made up of words and there are more words on and around the petals, all in Latin. Forming the eight divisions between the petals (possibly as a kind of eight-branched cross) is a message which translates roughly as follows: "Greetings to James, for a long time King of Great Britain. By your true protection may the rose be joyful."

This was sent in the year of the very first recorded manuscript of the *Fama*, two years before it appeared in print as the first of the manifestos. Yet here is Maier in 1612 addressing King James in terms that suggest the existence of a Rosicrucian-type movement in Britain, of which James was apparently seen as protector. Although James was a violent opponent of witchcraft, he was probably not unsympathetic to the Hermetic tradition and certainly had friends who were alchemists. It is not impossible, therefore, that a Rosicrucian-type circle, interested in alchemy and Hermetic ideas and looking toward James as its patron, existed in Britain in the very early stages of the movement. The document can therefore possibly be seen as a very early example of the rose (with or without the cross) being used as a kind of badge of recognition among people of Hermetic interests.

In 1619, Maier became physician to the Landgrave Moritz of Hesse. Soon afterward, he settled down to practice medicine at Magdeburg, where he died in 1622. Throughout his life, Maier was a devout Lutheran and is reported to have been a charitable and altruistic person. Unlike de Campis and Brotoffer, he believed that the Rosicrucian brotherhood had the secret of producing material gold. This secret, he maintained in *Silentium post Clamores* (Frankfurt,

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[2] Scottish Record Office, reference GD 242/212. The existence of this document was kindly brought to my attention by Adam McLean, who has analyzed it in an article titled "A Rosicrucian Manuscript of Michael Maier" in *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 5, Autumn, 1979.

1617), belonged to previous civilizations and was handed down by word of mouth. The Eleusinians, for example, "were very familiar with the art of making gold which they preserved and practiced so secretly that no one learned the name of the process."[3] Like Sperber, Maier saw the Rosicrucians as recipients of an ancient secret tradition.

Maier writes of the Rosicrucians in many of his works, his last defense of the brotherhood being *Themis Aurea* (Frankfurt, 1618), in which he describes the brethren as hard-working physicians and chemists, dedicated to the study of nature and the bringing about of a reformed world. The Rosicrucian brothers, he writes, have a chief to whom they are obedient and possess knowledge of the true astronomy, physics, mathematics, medicine, and chemistry by which they are able to produce rare and marvelous effects. He adds that they are very hard-working, frugal, and temperate.[4]

Regarding the meeting-place of the brotherhood, Maier mysteriously says: "We cannot set down the places where they meet, nor the time. I have sometimes observed Olympick Houses not far from a river, and known a city which we think is called S. Spiritus—I mean Helicon or Parnassus, in which Pegasus opened a spring of overflowing water wherein Diana washed herself, to whom Venus was handmaid and Saturn gentleman usher. This will sufficiently instruct an intelligent reader, but more confound the ignorant."[5]

In summary, Maier throws no light on the brotherhood itself, but his powerful advocacy of Rosicrucianism established it firmly as a subject of interest for serious minds. He also strongly reinforced its connection with the alchemical connection.

Perhaps the strangest participant in the whole Rosicrucian furor was a man who wrote under the name of Irenaeus Agnostus and who alternates in an extraordinary way between attacking and defending the brotherhood. This mysterious figure was at one time thought to be Andreae himself writing under a pseudonym, but it is now known that Agnostus was in fact Friedrich Grick, a private tutor at Altdorf near Nuremberg. It is likely that he also wrote under various other pseudonyms, among them Johannes Procopius, Menapius, Georgius Odaxus, Fraziskus Gometz, and Gentdorp.

In certain of his pronouncements, Agnostus writes as though he himself were one of the brethren. In *Tintinabulum Sophorum* (Nuremberg, 1619), he writes of "our" *Fama* and "our" brotherhood. "The time is near," he announces, "when we shall reveal with a clear voice that which is at present kept secret and make it known to every man."[6] On the question of alchemy, Agnostus assures his read-

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[3] Michael Maier, *Silentium post Clamores* (Frankfurt 1617). Translation mine.
[4] Michael Maier, *Themis Aurea* (Frankfurt, 1618). Translation mine.
[5] Michael Maier, *Themis Aurea*.
[6] Irenaeus Agnostus, *Tintinabulum Sophorum* (Nurenberg, 1619). Translation mine.

ers that the brotherhood can confer health both in body and in soul. In *Thesaurus Fidei* (1619), he refers to the production of gold, making it clear that he means the gold of Christian love. But in *Fortalitum Scientiae* (Nuremberg, 1618), he states his belief in the Philosopher's Stone and says that he himself has made experiments in this direction. In *Fons Gratiae* (Nuremberg, 1617), he refers his readers to Maier's *Themis Aurea*, where they can find out about the healing art of the Rosicrucians.

In direct contrast to Agnostus's defense of the Rosicrucians, however, there are passages in which he attacks and mocks them. These are sometimes mingled with, sometimes attached to, the defending passages. For example, in *Tintinabulum Sophorum*, he describes the *Fama* as a work of trickery and falsehood. And in *Fortalitum Scientiae*, he gives various nonsensical alchemical formulae in a spirit of mockery. In *Regula Vitae* (1619), he attacks the Rosicrucian apologist Theophilus Schweighart as a "Rosicrucian bat" and accuses him of having published false writings in the name of the brotherhood. Thus, to read Agnostus is to have the impression of being confronted by a trickster who displays two faces. Furthermore, the reader finds it difficult to say which is the real face and which is a mask.

There is, however, a thread of consistency running through the Agnostus writings. The author defends Lutheranism and attacks the Roman Church and, in these passages, seems to be speaking with a sincere voice. Moreover, he never attacks the basic ideals and Christian elements of the *Fama* and *Confessio*. He only mocks them when they speak of astrological and alchemical tendencies or of those who believe in the real existence of the fraternity.

Much light is thrown on Agnostus/Grick's true position by a correspondence between himself and Justus Cornelius which is discussed in detail in Schick's *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*.[7] In reply to Cornelius's inquiry as to the authorship of the *Fama* and *Confessio*, Grick writes:

> The first author of the *Fama* and *Confessio* R. C. is a great man and wishes particularly to remain a while longer concealed. He desired, however, only to learn the opinions of people and of these he experienced many kinds.

In another place, Grick says:

> The author of the *Fama* and *Confessio* is a great and illustrious man whom I originally took for a mad or capricious innovator; for this reason I set myself against him and

[7] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum* (Berlin: Nordland Verlag, 1942), pp. 232–236. Translation mine.

> wrote the *Fortalitum Scientiae* but when my first writing saw the light I learned that I had written a tragedy with jesting words and, at least with the curious, had provoked judgement and condemnation.

Grick's later works, he declares, were written, not against the author of the manifestos, but against those impostors who made use of the Rosicrucian craze for their own ends.

This clearly shows why Grick first attacked the author of the *Fama* and then became more sympathetic toward him, shifting his attack to the foolish people who looked to the brotherhood for alchemical wonders. Grick must have been close to the Andreae circle, otherwise he would not have known who the author of the *Fama* was. Evidently he did not take Andreae's scheme entirely seriously to begin with and attempted to counter the *Fama* with a healthy dose of mockery. But when he saw that he had merely fanned the flames of the controversy, he began to understand the method behind Andreae's madness. As a highly educated and widely traveled man, he was sympathetic to the ideas of brotherhood, enlightenment, and world reformation, and realized at length that Andreae's method of putting them across was effective, provided that the credulous could be kept in their place. From that point on, he kept up his game, but directed his barbs against the foolish and not the true Rosicrucians.

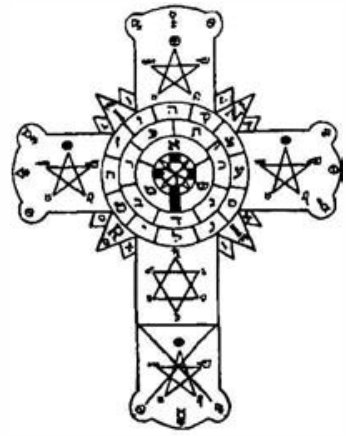
What might be called a Rosicrucian type of mind thus begins to emerge: a mind steeped in the Hermetic-Qabalistic tradition, in search of hidden wisdom, and prepared to travel far to find it. The epitome of this kind of mind is Joachim Morsius (1593–1643). Born at Hamburg, Morsius studied at the University of Rostock, where he devoted himself first to theology and then to humanities. He became interested early on in esoteric matters, and alchemy was one of the things that he studied closely. He yearned for an international reputation as a scholar and, in search of it, made a long series of journeys to foreign countries, including England, where he was given an M.A. at Cambridge in 1619. In addition to producing a number of works of his own, he edited and published many documents of an alchemical or theosophical nature. In his travels and his publishing activities, he ran through his inheritance and was imprisoned for four years in Hamburg as a debtor. He was only released through the intercession of the King of Denmark.

Morsius succeeded in earning a wide reputation among scholars and patrons of learning, but no solid or permanent recognition came his way. His mind was too restless and fleeting, and it is characteristic that he should have spent so much of his life searching for true Rosicrucian wisdom. Attracted as a young man by the manifestos, he wrote the customary letter requesting to join the order and, like other aspirants, received no reply. At first disillusioned by

this experience, he later wrote defending the secrecy of the brotherhood in *Theosophi Eximii* (Frankfurt, 1619). Later he met Andreae, whom he visited at Calw in 1629. The result of the meeting remains unclear, but evidently Andreae did not disillusion Morsius about the brotherhood, as he continued to search for Rosicrucian wisdom. Morsius' friend, the Paracelsan physician and alchemist Balthasar Walter, assured him that Jacob Boehme alone really understood the Rosicrucian doctrines, and he consequently wrote to the great mystic of Görlitz hoping to be enlightened. Boehme, however, when he replied, did not talk of the Rosicrucian reformation, but spoke instead of the true reformation in Christ. Next Morsius went to Sweden to talk with the pansophist Johann Buraeus about his book *Buccina veteris Jubilei*. After further wanderings, he died at Gottorp in Holstein in 1643.

Schick sees Morsius as the embodiment of the Rosicrucian type, "seeking along secret paths to attain the higher knowledge of hidden worlds, to unveil the ultimate mysteries and from the very basis of things to bring forth a new era."[8] Morsius may have failed in his search, but the dream would continue to be nurtured in other minds.

[8] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*, p. 189. Translation mine.



CHAPTER 5

THE SPREAD OF ROSICRUCIANISM

The Rosicrucian idea spread rapidly from its native German soil. Wherever groups of people interested in the Hermetic-Qabalistic tradition coalesced, the doctrines of Christian Rosenkreuz and his brotherhood came up in discussion.

In England, the hermetic tradition was familiar to a comparatively small circle. John Dee, one of its leading proponents, may well have influenced the Rosicrucian movement. Another eminent Englishman whose name has been linked with the Rosicrucians is Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the philosopher and statesman. To modern eyes, Bacon presents something of a sinister figure. In his public life, he pursued a policy of ruthless opportunism, gaining a number of important posts and rising to the peerage as Lord Verulam and then Viscount St. Albans. His fall came when, as Lord Chancellor, he was convicted of taking bribes and was banished from Parliament and the court. Five years later, he met a bizarre end. While traveling through Highgate, he stopped to stuff a fowl with snow in order to observe the effects of cold on the preservation of flesh. In the process, he caught a cold and died some days later at a friend's house near by.

In his writings, Bacon shows ideals that have a certain similarity to those expressed in the Rosicrucian manifestos. In *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), for example, he writes:

> Surely as nature createth brotherhood in families, and arts mechanical contract brotherhood in communities, and the anointment of God superintendeth a brotherhood in kings and bishops, so in learning there cannot but be a fraternity in learning and illumination, relating to that pa-

> ternity which is attributed to God, who is called the father of illumination or lights.[1]

This seems to anticipate the idea of a learned brotherhood propounded in the manifestos.

More striking are the Rosicrucian echoes in Bacon's posthumously published *New Atlantis*, where he describes a utopian society discovered by mariners in a hitherto unknown land. The sailors are shown a scroll "signed with a stamp of cherubim's wings, not spread, but hanging downwards, and by them a cross"—like the seal which appears at the end of the *Fama* bearing the motto "Under the Shadow of Jehova's Wings." They are also visited by an official wearing a white turban "with a small red cross at the top."[2] Puzzled by the New Atlanteans' knowledge of the outside world, the mariners are told that travelers are periodically sent out from New Atlantis to mingle incognito with the inhabitants of the countries they visited—another echo from the *Fama*.

As Frances Yates points out in her chapter on Bacon in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, it is clear from these similarities that Bacon knew and made use of the *Fama* and *Confessio*. But Bacon's connection with the Rosicrucians has been exaggerated to extraordinary proportions by certain people. F. W. C. Wigston, for example, in his *Bacon, Shakespeare and the Rosicrucians* (1888) and other works, claims not only that Bacon was the author of Shakespeare's plays, but that the plays themselves are full of coded Rosicrucian messages. The words "hanged hog," for example, are interpreted by Wigston as a code for "Bacon." It has even been suggested by Bacon enthusiasts that Bacon and Andreae, the author of *The Chemical Wedding*, are one and the same person. Bacon, they hold, did not die when catching cold on Highgate Hill, but subsequently went to Germany and began to write under the name of Andreae. Although engravings of Bacon and Andreae show a certain physical resemblance, it is difficult to square this theory with the fact that if it were true, Bacon would have been 133 years old when he died—a remarkable age, even if he had possessed the Rosicrucian elixir of life.

Other claims for Bacon are not quite so extravagant. Some members of Wigston's school of thought point out that the little coterie devoted to learning and the shunning of female company which is so amusingly portrayed in *Love's Labours Lost* is intended to represent the Rosicrucian ideal. It seems unlikely that there is any direct connection between this play and the Rosicrucian move-

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[1] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Reprint: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[2] Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* (London: Spedding, Ellis and Heath, 1857). Reprinted with *The Advancement of Learning*, edited by A. Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

ment, however (leaving aside the claim that Bacon was the author of both), since the play was first produced in about 1595, fifteen years before the *Fama* was in circulation. Conceivably, however, the idea behind *Love's Labours Lost* and the *Fama* came out of the same tradition.

A more direct Rosicrucian connection can be found in the works of Robert Fludd (1574–1637). Born the son of a Kentish squire, Fludd spent part of his youth traveling abroad. During this period, he may have come into contact with some of the continental Hermeticists. He returned to study medicine at Oxford, whence he graduated in 1605. In 1609, he was admitted as a Fellow of the College of Physicians, but only after encountering some opposition owing to his unorthodox opinions and arrogant personal manner.

Some time after 1612, the German alchemist Michael Maier visited England, and, as I said in the last chapter, it is probable that he met Fludd. It appears to have been on this visit that Maier first heard of the Rosicrucian fraternity, possibly from Fludd himself. Fludd, however, did not deal with the subject in print until 1616, when he produced, as his first published work, a book titled *Apologia Compendiaria Fraternitatem de Rosea Cruce suspicionis et infamiae maculis aspersam, veritatis quasi Fluctibus abluens et abstergens* [A Compendius Apology for the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, pelted with the mire of suspicion and infamy but now cleansed with the waters of truth]—the word *Fluctibus*, "waters," being a pun on the name of the author. The work, like all Fludd's Rosicrucian writings, is in Latin.

An interesting thing about Fludd is that, for his important works, he chose continental publishers with occult interests. The *Apologia* and its follow-up, the *Tractatus Apologeticus* [Apologetic Treatise for the Integrity of the Society of the Rosy Cross] (1617), were published by Godfrey Basson at Leyden in Holland. His monumental two-part treatise, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* [History of the Macrocosm, 1617–1618, and History of the Microcosm, 1619], was published by the firm of De Bry at Oppenheim in the Palatinate.

One of Fludd's opponents was the French monk Marin Mersenne (1588–1648) who, in a published attack on Fludd's whole system (*Questiones in Genesim*, Paris, 1623) also attacked the Rosicrucians. In this work, Mersenne wrote:

> With diligence I wish to admonish the judges, and with earnestness the princes, that they shall not let these monsters of false opinion rage within the sphere of their influence. Rather should they completely eradicate these brothers of hell, these Brothers of the Rosicrucians, who on almost every market-day at Frankfort introduce their writings, stinking of godlessness, telling about their false and mysterious Father R.C. and his cave, presenting these

> before the people of the Christian world. For it is blasphemy they teach, and they make themselves known as the heirs of the Magi, whose works they copy, producing little themselves.[3]

Fludd replied in *Summum Bonum*, saying that Mersenne was confusing the true Rosicrucians with the imposters who "deceive people every day with their superstitious magic, affected astrology, false formulae of a sub-chemistry, or their pranks with a deceitful cabala."[4]

Fludd goes on to say that the place or cloister of the fraternity—that is, the House of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the *Fama*—is not to be understood in literal terms. The House, he says, is a spiritual dwelling resting upon the rock which is Christ. He loosely quotes the Apostle Paul: "Your habitation was not made by the hands of men, but we have a spiritual building in the heavens, which is the House of Wisdom on the Mount of Reason, built upon the spiritual rock" (see First Epistle to the Corinthians, X, 4, and Second Epistle to the Corinthians, V, I).

In the same way, Fludd claims, the Rosicrucian brotherhood is a spiritual fraternity. "If one kinship," Fludd writes, "is of the flesh and of man, another is spiritual and divine." Fludd also seems to regard the Rosicrucians as a real brotherhood, for he reproduces a letter which he claims was "written by the Rosicrucian Brothers and sent to a German candidate" and which he had received "through my friend at Danzig."[5] The letter itself throws very little light on the brotherhood, merely urging the candidate to lead a spiritual life and strive for perfection.

A point worth making about Fludd is that he may have been a Freemason—there was, it is recorded, a Masonic Hall near his London house in Coleman Street. A. E. Waite poses the question whether Fludd might have been responsible for introducing a Rosicrucian strain into Freemasonry. There is no proof of this, and it is difficult to establish when Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism first came into contact. But it is perhaps significant that the first reference linking the two is dated 1638, the year after Fludd's death. It comes in Henry Adamson's *Muses Threnodie*:

> For what we do presage is not in grosse,
> For we be brethren of the Rosie Cross:
> We have the Mason's word and second sight,
> Things for to come we can fortell aright.[6]

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[3] Marin Mersenne, in Paul M. Allen, ed., *A Christian Rosenkreutz* Anthology (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), pp. 352–353.
[4] Robert Fludd in *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, p. 354.
[5] The material quoted in this chapter comes from *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, pp. 355–356, 358, 375.
[6] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum* (Berlin: Nordland Verlag, 1942), pp. 154–156. Translation mine.

Another possible link between Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry involes Andreae's disciple, the Bohemian refugee Comenius, who dreamed of an enlightened Utopia, similar to the one described by Andreae in *Christianopolis*, in which science and religion would flourish and in which all creeds and races would be respected. Comenius was in England for a time after 1641. Hans Schick says of Comenius: "We have in him not only the middleman between the father of Rosicrucian thought, J. V. Andreae, and those who stood as godparents at the birth of English Freemasonry, such as Hartlib, Dury and others, but also the bridge from Rosicrucian ideology to organized Freemasonry in general. He received the torch from Andreae and carried it to the British Isles."[7]

It must be remembered that Schick, having been commissioned by Heinrich Himmler, was writing from an anti-Masonic position. Nevertheless, his book is a high scholarly work, and there may be something in his suggestion. Despite much research by Masonic historians, virtually nothing concrete is known about the change, thought to have taken place in the late 16th or early 17th century, from operative to speculative Masonry nor about why it occurred. Two of the earliest known speculative Masons, Sir Robert Moray (c. 1600–1675) and Elias Ashmole (who will be mentioned again shortly) were, however, both deeply interested in Rosicrucianism. Moreover, the Rosicrucian phenomenon emerged in Germany at approximately the same time that speculative Masonry, or Freemasonry, was emerging in Britain—a time when esoteric currents were flowing freely back and forth between Britain and the Continent. It has often been suggested that the Hiramic legend in Masonry might be linked with the legend of Christian Rosenkreuz and his tomb—although the Hiramic motif does not appear to have become a significant component of Masonry until about the 1720s. It is not impossible, therefore, that an impulse of a Rosicrucian nature (using the word "Rosicrucian" in its widest sense) was responsible for the transformation of operative into speculative Masonry.[8]

Schick also suggests that Comenius and the stream of thought that he represented constituted one of the influences behind the formation of the Royal Society, a line of thought later followed by Frances Yates. Robert Boyle, one of the most active early members of the Society, refers in a letter to an "Invisible College," which he sometimes attended and which may have been some sort of precursor to the Royal Society. John Wilkins, another leading Royal Society man, also knew of the Rosicrucian legend and refers to it in his *Mathematicall Magick* (1648). It seems likely that the Royal Society, founded in 1660, was an attempt to realize in practical terms the Rosicrucian ideals of a brotherhood of learning and enlightenment

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[7] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*, pp. 154–156. Translation mine.

[8] For a fuller discussion of this question, see A. C. F. Jackson's paper "Rosicrucianism and its Effect on Craft Masonry" in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, Vol. 97, 1984, pp. 115–150.

which would help usher in the kind of Utopia visualized by Bacon, Andreae, Comenius, and others.

The Royal Society was not, however, the first body to make this attempt. A much earlier society was founded in Germany by Joachim Jungius (1587–1657), a mathematician and medical scholar, and an important forerunner of Linnaeus in the creation of scientific botany. Born in Lübeck, Jungius studied medicine at Rostock and Padua and subsequently held a chair of mathematics at Rostock and of medicine at Helmstedt. In 1628, he became head of the Gymnasium and Johanneum at Hamburg. He knew Comenius by correspondence and came into contact with members of the Andreae circle while at Rostock in 1618. He was associated closely enough with the Rosicrucian movement for many people, including Leibniz, to believe him to have been the author of the *Fama*.

In 1622, Jungius founded at Rostock a philosophical society called the *Societas ereunetica* or *zetetica*, the aims of which were described as follows: "To seek the truth from reason and experience and to prove it when it has been found; or to free from sophistry all arts and sciences founded on reason and experience, to lead them back to a demonstrable certainty, to propagate them through correct instruction and finally to increase them through happy inventions."[9] This society became a reality, and among its members was Johann Adolph Tassius (1585–1654), a friend of Andreae. It disappeared, however, in the confusion of the Thirty Years' War.

Although similar bodies had existed in Italy, the *Societas ereunetica* can be described as the first scientific academy in northern Europe. The fact that Rosicrucian ideals appear to have been behind it underlines the importance of the Rosicrucian phenomenon as a catalytic force. Although the *Societas ereunetica* was more of a school than the Royal Society, it nevertheless may have acted as an example to the founders of the latter, who must certainly have known about it through Comenius and others.

The Rosicrucian idea can be seen in England in two different streams which often converge. On the one hand, the utopian stream represented by Comenius was concerned with social, scientific, and philosophical ideals. On the other hand, the Hermetic-Qabalistic-alchemical stream was more concerned with the occult aspects of Rosicrucianism. One representative of the second stream is Thomas Vaughan (1622–1656), who was the twin brother of the religious poet, Henry Vaughan. Vaughan can be considered the successor to Robert Fludd as the main English Rosicrucian apologist. In 1650, under the name of Eugenius Philalethes, he published *Anthroposophia Theomagica*, dedicated to the "regenerated Brethren R.C." This appears to be the first apologia for the Rosicrucians in English, as opposed to Latin. Vaughan also published, an English translation of *The Fame* and the *Confession* (1652) with a preface under the same pseudonym.

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[9] Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*, p. 143. Translation mine.

Vaughan evidently based his translation of the *Fama* on a manuscript version in the possession of the Scottish Hermetist Sir David Lindsay, Earl of Balcarres (1585–1641), whose home, Edzell Castle in Angus, had a remarkable "Garden of the Planets," a walled enclosure with carved panels representing the seven planetary deities, the seven liberal arts, and the seven cardinal virtues. An article by Adam McLean on this garden and the Lindsay family appeared in *The Hermetic Journal*. McLean writes of Sir David Lindsay: "He had connections with the Rosicrucians during the early part of the 17th century, and there are still preserved manuscript copies in his own hand of his alchemical notebooks, which include a translation of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the first Rosicrucian Manifesto. It is interesting that it has now been established that the first printed translation into English of the *Fama*, in 1652, although ascribed to Thomas Vaughan, is an adaptation of this earlier manuscript translation. Vaughan must have had access to Sir David Lindsay's MS and drew heavily upon it for his translation. Perhaps Sir David's MS was circulated around the alchemical/Rosicrucian adepts during the early decades of the seventeenth century, or could it rather be that people like Vaughan actually visited Edzell during that time?"[10]

Of the garden, Adam McLean writes:

> We can find something woven into its symbolic carvings reflecting the atmosphere which permeates the Rosicrucian document. *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, an allegory of initiation, an important part of which is the leading of the hero or candidate before various sculptures and other ritual items which he has had to contemplate to absorb their significance. . . . So it is my thesis that the Edzell Garden of the Planets should be seen as an early seventeenth-century Mystery Temple connected with the hermetic revival. A carved plaque over the entrance bears the date 1604 (most likely the year of its foundation), and when one remembers that James VI, who had a great interest in and was a patron of aspects of occultism, became King of the United Kingdom of Scotland and England in 1603, one realises that the building of this Mystery Temple was not taking place in a vacuum, but was part of a general renaissance of interest in hermeticism in the society of that period. Edzell was possibly a place of instruction in hermetic and alchemical philosophy and may have been a centre of Rosicrucian activity.[11]

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[10] Adam McLean, "A Rosicrucian Alchemical Mystery Center in Scotland," in *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 4, Summer, 1979, pp. 10–13.

[11] Adam McLean, "A Rosicrucian Alchemical Mystery Center in Scotland," *The Hermetic Journal*.

It would appear from this that Scotland played an important and possibly key role in the early development of Rosicrucianism. This is an area of study that would clearly reward further research.

An interesting light is thrown on Vaughan's attitude to Rosicrucianism by another of his works, *Lumen de Lumine* (1651), in which he writes as though he himself were a Rosicrucian brother. He scorns those people who suppose "that we will straightway teach them how to make gold by art, or furnish them with ample treasures, whereby they may live pompously in the face of the world . . ." Vaughan goes on to describe a mountain "situated in the midst of the earth or centre of the world which is both small and great. It is soft, also above measure hard and stony. It is far off and near at hand, but by the providence of God invisible. In it are hidden the most ample treasures, which the world is not able to value."[12] It is clear that Vaughan is here referring to the mountain that must be climbed in search of spiritual attainment. But in the works of other writers—for example in *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer*, which I shall come to in the next chapter—a mountain covered with symbols is used as an allegory of the alchemical process. This indicates that Rosicrucianism and alchemy are to be seen as having an inner and an outer aspect. This also will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

It is worth mentioning here the literary skirmish which occurred between Vaughan and the great Cambridge platonist, Henry More (1614–1687). More, writing under the name of Alazonomastix Philalethes, objected to Vaughan's use of a similar pseudonym. He attacked Vaughan in *Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica* (1650), and Vaughan replied with *The Man Mouse taken in a trap and tortured to death for gnawing the margins of Eugenius Philalethes* (1650). More responded with *The Second Lash of Alazonomastix* (1651), but Vaughan had the last word with *The Second Wash: or, the Moor, scour'd once more* (1651). More was, by the way, a friend and correspondent of the German Qabalist, Knorr von Rosenroth.

Another important English figure interested in Rosicrucianism was Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), antiquarian, historian, alchemist, and founder of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Ashmole's interest in alchemy led him to put together an important collection of alchemical writings under the title of *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1651). In the preface to this work, he makes the following direct quotation from the *Fama*:

> And certainly he to whom the whole course of nature lies open rejoiceth not so much that he can make gold and silver or the devils be made subject to him as that he sees

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[12] Thomas Vaughan, *Lumen de Lumine* (1651) in A. E. Waite, *The Works of Thomas Vaughan: Eugenius Philalethes* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), pp. 260, 261.

> the heavens open, the angels of God ascending and descending, and that his own name is fairly written in the Book of Life.[13]

Ashmole also mentions the much-quoted story from the *Fama* that a Rosicrucian brother known as "J. O." came to England and "cured a young Earl of Norfolk of the leprosy."

In keeping with the Rosicrucian tradition, Ashmole was interested in the search for the Philosophers' Stone. His diary for 13 May 1653 records that his alchemical teacher, William Backhouse, "lying sick in Fleetstreete over against St Dunstans Church, & not knowing whether he should live or die, about eleven o'clock, told me in Silables the true matter of the Philosophers' Stone: which he bequeathed me as a Legacy."[14] The editor of the diaries, C. H. Josten, adds in a footnote an interesting possible explanation for the reference to "Silables": "There is an anonymous alchemical manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Manuscript Français No. 12335). . . . It dates from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and contains, at ff. 89^{v}–90, a chapter entitled 'Sillabes Chimiques.' The author of the manuscript explains that certain syllables to be derived from seven hieroglyphic signs, which he placed at the beginning of the chapter, will form 'un mot significatif ou un charactère universel,' revealing 'le veritable nom et charactère de la matière première' (a significatory word or a universal character revealing the true name and character of the first matter). Backhouse did not in fact die until 30 May 1662.

Another interesting document is a letter in Ashmole's handwriting among his papers in the Bodleian Library. It is in Latin and is addressed to the Brothers of the Rosy Cross, asking if the writer may be allowed to join their fraternity. In his documents are translations of the *Fama* and *Confessio* in his own hand, and elsewhere among his papers is the original from which these translations were made. Interestingly, Ashmole's original is not the same as the Thomas Vaughan version.

In view of the interest aroused in England by the Rosicrucian question, it is strange that the first translation of *The Chemical Wedding* was not published until long after the translations of the *Fama* and *Confessio*. Its translator was Ezechiel Foxcroft (1633–1676), another curious figure, whose short life followed an interesting path. Born in London, the son of a merchant, he went to Eton and then, at 16, to King's College, Cambridge, from which he took his B.A. in 1652 and M.A. in 1656. He was a Fellow of King's from 1652–1674 and Senior Proctor of the University from 1673–1674.

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[13] See Paul M. Allen, *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), p. 606.

[14] C. H. Josten, ed., *The Diaries of Elias Ashmole*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1962), p. 643.

Foxcroft's interests, however, were not solely those of the cloistered academic. He was among the supporters of an Irish healer named Valentine Greatrakes who came to England in 1666 attracting thousands of people seeking to be cured. Among others who endorsed Greatrakes was the scientist Robert Boyle. It is not known if Greatrakes professed to being a Rosicrucian, but healing was a primary function of the supposed brotherhood, and it may have been a Rosicrucian connection that led Foxcroft to support Greatrakes.

Foxcroft was almost certainly a member of the circle that revolved around Anne Finch, Viscountess Conway. Lady Conway was a remarkable woman. A martyr to recurring migraine, she sought relief in the study of esoteric ideas. Her correspondence shows her, as a young woman, writing to her father-in-law and alluding to the "two pillars" of the "Craft Legend" (i.e., Masonry), "the one of stone against the inundations of water, the other of brick against the fury of fire"[15]—not the usual language of a young 17th-century bride. Her brother, John Finch, had been a pupil of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, and she herself became friendly with More, encouraging him in the writing of his Qabalistic work *Conjectura Cabalistica*. Lady Conway was also friendly with More's pupil, Ralph Cudworth and with another member of the More circle, Francis Mercurius van Helmont (1618–1699), the alchemist, Qabalist, and Paracelsan physician who acted as her doctor.

The Conway home at Ragley in Warwickshire became a meeting-place for those interested in Hermetic and related studies: More, Cudworth, Greatrakes, van Helmont, and others. Possibly Thomas Vaughan also visited Ragley. Certainly Vaughan and his translations of the *Fama* and *Confessio* were well known to the circle, and Rosicrucianism must have been one of the subjects most keenly discussed. Foxcroft's translation of *The Chemical Wedding* was probably circulated among them in manuscript, though it was not published until 1690, fourteen years after the translator's death.

On the Continent, Rosicrucian brethren were widely defended and attacked, praised and reviled. In the Netherlands in particular, the Rosicrucian question was hotly debated. There is a vague report of a Rosicrucian order founded by one Christian Rose at the Hague in 1622 which was concerned with alchemy. The order is said to have had other assemblies at Amsterdam, Erfurt, Nuremberg, Hamburg, Danzig, Mantua, and Venice.[16] A more concrete report states that, in 1625, the Court of Justice in the Dutch province of Holland sent a number of Rosicrucian books to the theological professors at Leyden, asking for their opinion. The Leyden faculty replied attacking the Rosicrucian tenets in the strongest terms. They

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[15] Desirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1964), p. 153.

[16] See C. F. Nicolai, *Einige Bemerkungen über den Ursprung und die Geschichte der R. K. und F. M.* (Berlin and Stettin: 1906).

recommended that members of the order should be treated as being on the verge of insanity, unless they threatened the inviolability of the Church and the peace of the State, in which case they should be punished more severely.[17]

This, however, did not deter a self-styled Rosicrucian adept called Peter Mormius from posing as an ambassador of a "Collegium Rosanium" and publishing *Arcana Totius Naturae Secretissima* [The Entire Secrets of Nature] (Leyden, 1630), which supposedly revealed Rosicrucian secrets. According to Mormius, the order was concerned with nothing but alchemy, the Universal Medicine, and the secret of perpetual motion. Mormius claimed to have come into contact in 1620 with a very old man named Rose who was a member of the Golden Rosy Cross which was composed of only three people. Though he would not accept Mormius as a member, the old man took him on as a servant. Mormius thereby obtained knowledge of the order's secrets. Mormius attempted to approach the States General as a representative of the brotherhood, but was refused—not surprisingly, in view of the hostile attitude of the Leyden professors.[18] Mormius' reference to an order composed of three people is interesting, however, since, as far as I know, this is the first mention of a "Golden Rosy Cross" instead of just "Rosy Cross." Later, I will discuss how the name "Golden and Rosy Cross" was adopted by a highly active German order.

Similar hostility was shown to the Rosicrucians in France. According to one French anti-Rosicrucian polemicist, Gabriel Naudé (in his *Instruction à la France sur la vérité de l'histoire des Frères de la Rose Croix*, Paris, 1623), placards appeared in 1623 in the streets of Paris bearing the following announcement:

> We, being deputies of the principal College of the Brothers of the Rose Cross, are making a visible and invisible stay in this city through the Grace of the Most High, towards whom turn the hearts of the Just. We show and teach without books or marks how to speak all languages of the countries where we wish to be, and to draw men from error and death.[19]

Naudé regarded this manifesto as a joke, but another (anonymous) author, in a pamphlet titled *Examen sur la nouvelle et inconnue Cabale de Frères de la Croix-Rozée* (Paris, 1623), attacked the movement as a creation of Satan whose purposes included denial of God, blasphemy against the Holy Trinity, Sacrifice to Satan, black magic, and frequenting of the Witches' Sabbath.

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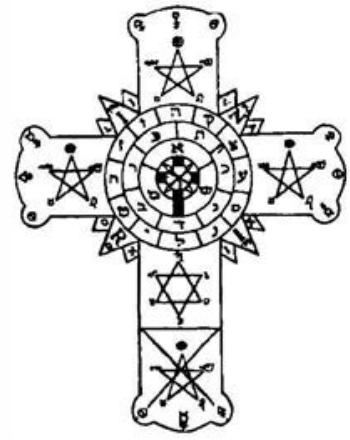
[17] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider & Co., 1924), p. 345.
[18] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, p. 346–347.
[19] Gabriel Naudé, *Instruction à la France sur la vérité de l'histoire des Frères de la Rose Croix* (Paris, 1623), p. 27.

Even more sensational were the revelations of another anonymous pamphleteer, author of *Effroyables Pactions faites entre le Diable et les prétendues Invisibles* (Paris, 1623). According to this writer, the College of Rosicrucians had made an agreement with a necromancer named Raspuch and the document had been signed by members with their own blood. This was done in the presence of Astaroth, manifesting as a beautiful youth on behalf of his master, Satan. In return for agreeing to perform various evil and blasphemous acts, the Rosicrucians had been given the power to become invisible, pass through locked doors, read the most secret thoughts, be carried from place to place at will, and speak eloquently in every language. Each member wore a gold and sapphire ring by which he commanded a demon as his personal guide and mentor.

We have already mentioned Abbé Mersenne's attack. Another churchman who attacked the Rosicrucians was the Jesuit François Garasse in his *La Doctrine Curieuse des Beaux Esprits de ce Temps* (Paris, 1623). Garasse claimed that the brethren were a secret sect in Germany whose secretary was Michael Maier. In Germany, Garasse remarks, inn-keepers hang roses in their taverns to show that things spoken in drunkenness should be kept secret afterward. The Rosicrucians, he maintains, are drinkers who publish their secrets only in taverns—hence the use of the symbol. Like the other pamphleteers, Garasse regarded the Rosicrucians as wicked sorcerers.

Not all Frenchmen were hostile to the Rosicrucians. The philosopher Descartes heard of the brotherhood during his travels in Germany and attempted in vain to contact them. He arrived back in France at the height of the Rosicrucian furor. In order to avoid being branded as one of their number, he had to make himself visible to his friends instead of pursuing his usual solitary habits, thus running the risk of being thought "invisible."

As in Germany, the Rosicrucian controversy in France was short-lived, and nothing more of the brotherhood is heard there for over a century. Subsequently, however, France became the center of a highly active and colorful revival of Rosicrucianism.



CHAPTER 6

THE SEARCH FOR THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

The Rosicrucianism of the Andreae era was only partly concerned with alchemy, but later revivals of the Rosicrucian idea were to lay great stress on their claims to possess the secrets of transmutation and the knowledge of the Philosopher's Stone or the Elixir of Life. Had it not been for the defense of the Rosicrucians by the German alchemist Michael Maier, the movement might have developed in a totally different direction. But Maier's apologies for the brotherhood, chiefly *Symbola Aureae Mensae* (1617) and *Themis Aurea* (1618), emphasized the alchemical element in the movement. This was reaffirmed by later adherents and by a considerable number of charlatans who made use of the alchemical connection for their own ends.

It was a century after Maier that alchemical Rosicrucianism became firmly established. During the interval, very little was heard of the Rosy Cross in Germany. Then, in 1710, a work was published in Breslau titled *Die wahrhafte und volkommene Bereitung des philosophischen Steins der Brüderschafft aus dem Orden des Gulden und Rosen Kreutzes* [The True and Complete Preparation of the Philosophers' Stone of the Brotherhood, from the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross]. The author, "Sincerus Renatus," was in reality one Sigmund or Samuel Richter, a pastor from Hartmannsdorf near Landshut in Silesia, who had studied Protestant theology in Halle. He was a follower of Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme and was deeply interested in medicine and alchemy. In *The True and Complete Preparation*, Renatus described a number of alchemical processes, and set out the rules and constitution of an alleged Rosicrucian order. The contents of his book lean heavily on a number of previous works, chiefly *Echo der von Gott hocherleuchteten Fraternitet, des löblichen Ordens R.C.* [Echo of the God-illuminated Brotherhood of

the Venerable Order R.C.] by Julius Sperber (1615), and Michael Maier's *Themis Aurea.*

The brotherhood, as presented by Renatus, lacked the anti-papal spirit of the earlier Rosicrucian writings and allowed Roman Catholic members. It had an imperator elected for life and a membership restricted to sixty-three. The imperator was required to change his name and place of abode every ten years and keep a record of each individual brother. Each brother, after being accepted, received a sufficient portion of the Philosophers' Stone to ensure that his life would continue for another sixty years, but in return he had to observe a number of rules. The Stone, for example, must never be carried in the form of oil but only as "powder of the first projection" contained in a metal box with a metal stopper. Furthermore, it must never be administered to a woman in labor, otherwise "she would be brought prematurely to bed." There is also a very puzzling provision that "the stone shall not be used at the chase."[1]

Renatus also gives details of initiation procedures, vows, and greetings. When two brethren meet each other in the street, the first brother shall say: "Ave, Frater," to which the second shall reply: "Roseae et Aureae." The first then adds the word "Crucis." Having thus established each other's status, they shall say: "Benedictus Dominus Deus noster Qui dedit nobis signum" and uncover their respective seals of the order.

The question that raises itself is whether any real order lay behind Renatus' document. Waite, in his rather vague and ponderous way, says Renatus' book shows that "a notable change has come over the spirit and form of the Order and that it has passed under a methodised rule, suggesting something behind it which had been growing up in the silence, far from the common ken."[2]

Waite here was thinking along the right lines, and I believe that we can go a step further and make a reasonable guess as to what this "something" was that had been "growing up in silence." A certain amount can be deduced from what is known of Richter and his work. At the beginning of *The True and Perfect Preparation*, Renatus says that the book is not his own work, but was copied from a manuscript given to him by a "Professor of the Art," whose name he will not reveal. The manuscript, he says, names the true practices and regulations of the order, as well as the two places where they were in the habit of meeting. The references to meeting-paces have, however, been altered "since none of them [the brothers] remain in

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[1] Samuel or Sigmund Richter (Sincerus Renatus), *Die wahrhafte und volkommene Bereitung des philosophischen Steins der Brüderschafft aus dem Orden des Gulden und Rosen Kreutzes* [The True Perfect Preparation of the Philosopher's Stone of the Brotherhood, from the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross] (Breslau, 1710). This and a subsequent passages is from pp. 405–406, 409 in A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London, Rider, 1924).

[2] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider, 1924), p. 403.

Europe but a few years ago departed for India in order to live there in greater peace."[3] This departure for India had already been mentioned by the anti-Rosicrucian writer, Heinrich Neuhaus, in his *Pia et Utilissima Admonitio de Fratribus Rosae Crucis* (1618). The reference to India could have been passed on to Richter from such an earlier source, but it seems unlikely that an honest Protestant pastor would have invented the story of a "Professor of the Art" who had given him the manuscript. Nor does it seem likely that he would have spoken with such conviction of an existing brotherhood without reason. It is possible that Richter himself was a member of the brotherhood, in which case Sincerus Renatus could have been the name he assumed in the order—"Sincerus" meaning "true," "genuine," or "sincere" and "Renatus" meaning "reborn."

Richter, as I mentioned, had studied theology in Halle, a town which was a great center of alchemical studies in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was also, as mentioned in chapter 3, the home of a lodge of the Unzertrennlichen which bore the name of Sincera Confoederatio, suggesting a connection with the first half of Richter's pseudonym. It seems likely, therefore, that Richter was a member of the Unzertrennlichen. If so, the Unzertrennlichen become an even more important key to the history of Rosicrucianism than I have already suggested. You have seen how the order seems to have been intimately connected with the original manifestos. Now it appears that the Unzertrennlichen may also have been part of the "missing link" between the old Rosicrucians of the Andreae era and the new Gold- und Rosenkreuz order of the 18th century. It is therefore worth taking a closer look at this interesting order.

In his monumental book on estoteric movements, *Die Erleuchteten*, Karl Frick describes the symbolism used by the Unzertrennlichen. In their meetings a bible, a skull, and an hour glass stood on a table. Their symbols included Sun, Moon, stars, a female figure representing Pansophia, a compass, a circle, and three globes. They spoke of ascending seven steps to a "source of wisdom," the "highest architect of the world." This is Gnostic terminology reminiscent of the ascent through the seven planets to reach the divine source, a fragment of which is present in humans.

The order had five grades. Initiates of the first and second wore a silver cross and those of the higher grades a golden cross. Possibly, when a member had reached the highest grade, he was admitted to an inner order where the "golden cross" became the "golden and rosy cross," the addition of the rose perhaps signifying initiation into a special teaching deriving from oriental sources.

As mentioned earlier, the founders of the Unzertrennlichen included owners of mines and smelting works. This underlines the

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[3] Samuel (Sigmund) Richter (Sincerus Renatus), "The True and Faithful Preparation," See A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, p. 403 fn 2.

fact, brought out by Mircea Eliade in *The Forge and the Crucible*, that there was a strong mystique associated with mining and metallurgy, just as there was with alchemy—indeed in many cultures, the smith and the alchemist are the same person. In mythologies all over the world, there are smith deities: Vulcan in Graeco-Roman mythology, and Wayland or Wieland in the Nordic tradition. The work of the sacred metallurgist and the alchemist is everywhere based on the same concepts: a hierarchy of matter, a hidden perfection in nature, the pure waiting to be released from the impure. As with the alchemical mystique, this mystique of mining and metallurgy remained a strong tradition in Germany until well into the 18th century. The Unzertrennlichen were entirely in keeping with this tradition.

A further factor in the German religious climate of this period should be mentioned: the movement known as Pietism, to which Samuel Richter almost certainly belonged. Dating from approximately the 1670s, Pietism aimed at creating a renewed, regenerated, and purified form of Protestantism, emphasizing virtuous living, good works, and emotionally felt piety. Its counterparts in other countries included Jansenism and Quietism in France, and Methodism and Quakerism in England. By 1700, it had become a powerful force throughout much of Germany, and the town of Halle, where Samuel Richter studied, was one of its centers of influence. There is a streak of Gnosticism in the writings of the Pietists, who are fond of contrasting the corrupt physical world with the true realm of the spirit. Hence it is not surprising that many of the Pietists were also profoundly influenced by alchemy. Not only is their language filled with alchemical and metallurgical images and metaphors (the "holy tincture," the "divine quintessence," God as the great "smelter"), but many of them actually practiced laboratory alchemy.

Samuel Richter was evidently a typical example of the link between Pietism, alchemy, and Rosicrucianism. This link might seem surprising in view of the apparent contrast between the simple, heartfelt style of Pietism and the elaborately secret and hierarchical world of the Golden and Rosy Cross. Nevertheless, the connection is there, as many examples prove (I give a fuller account of this connection in another work, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*—see bibliography).

The evidence so far points to the existence of an alchemical movement, calling itself the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, widely spread but operating secretly. Other documents survive besides those of Renatus which support this view. Scattered over the German-speaking world are manuscripts bearing the name "Gold- und Rosenkreuz." They contain identical alchemical formulae, but describe them in different words. This suggests that these documents were not simply copied from the same source, but reflected a teaching circulated orally or in the form of notes among a certain group of people.

One of these manuscripts is now in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. It is titled *Testamentum der Fraternitet Roseae et Aureae Crucis* [The Testament of the Fraternity of the Rosy and Golden Cross]. A note on one of the endpapers records that it was acquired by Johann Adalbert, Prinz de Buchau, in 1735.

This document begins by listing a series of rules of the order, similar to those set out by Renatus, but with a few differences. For example, the number of brethren has been raised from sixty-three to seventy-seven. It goes on to describe a number of alchemical processes, including the manufacture of the elixir of life from bodily fluids such as blood and urine.

A similar manuscript in the Württemberg State Library in Stuttgart, *Thesaurus Thesaurorum a Fraternitatet Rosae et Aureae Crucis* [The Treasure House of Treasure Houses of the Fraternity of the Rosy and Golden Cross], has already been mentioned in chapter 3. This author wrote on the title page the date 1580, which probably cannot be taken at face value. The document likewise contains rules of the order and some of the same alchemical processes described in different language. The processes for making the elixir from blood and urine are lengthy and complex. The instructions for using sweat, however, are simpler:

> Take some sweat and pound it with some gold leaf in a mortar until it turns black. Put it in a glass vessel and leave it to settle. It will turn a variety of colours ending a blood-red. Leave it for a month to putrefy, then distill in a retort. When you have distilled five grams you will have a substance with which you can perform great wonders.[4]

The Golden and Rosy Cross must be seen against a background of the general resurgence of alchemy in the 18th century, which presents a very interesting phenomenon. Many of the nobility practiced or patronized alchemy. For example, Prince Ludwig Georg Karl von Hessen-Darmstadt (1749–1823) employed an alchemist called Peter Christian Tyssen whom he had brought back from Italy. Ferdinand, Duke of Braunschweig (1721–1792), was also interested in the "Great Work" and had an alchemical laboratory in his castle at Vechelde.

Another alchemist active at this period was the mysterious Comte de Saint Germain, who became so much of a legend that it is difficult to disentangle fact from fiction in the reports of his life. After traveling around Europe under a number of pseudonyms—including the Marquis de Montferrat, Chevalier Schoening, Comte

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[4] *Thesaurus Thesaurorum a Fraternittatet Rosae et Aureae Crucis* [The Treasure House of Treasure Houses of the Fraternity of the Rosy and Golden Cross], 1580, a manuscript in the Würtemberg State Library in Stuttgart. Translation mine.

Soltikoff, and Graf Tzarogy—he ended up as a permanent guest at the castle of the Landgraf Karl von Hessen-Kassel, where he died around 1780. The Compte was reputed to have possessed an elixir which had kept him alive for 400 years. When he was in Dresden, his coachman was asked if this were true. The coachman replied that he did not know exactly, but in the 130 years he had been in his master's service, the count had always looked as he did now.[5] Not surprisingly, the Comte has been claimed as a Rosicrucian adept.

In Austria, the craze for alchemy became a positive epidemic. At one time there are said to have been 10,000 alchemists in Vienna who carried out their activities regardless of a policy of persecution against them approved by Maria Theresa. Ironically, the Empress's husband Francis (made Emperor in 1745) was himself a zealous alchemist and had a laboratory installed in the royal palace.[6]

Some interesting information about alchemy in Vienna is given in Gustav Brabbée's *Sub Rosa—Vertrauliche Mitteilungen aus dem maurerischen Leben userer Grossväter* (Vienna, 1879), a document based on manuscripts in his grandfather's legacy. Writing from a hostile point of view, Brabbée states:

> During the years 1782 and 1783 there existed an alchemical society in Vienna which gave itself the pompous name of the "high, wise, noble and excellent Knights of the Shooting Star." Their assemblies took place two or three times a week, especially on cold, clear nights in late autumn, in the extensive grounds of an estate near Vienna belonging to a count, and were always surrounded by secrecy. The Grand Master of this society is said to have been a much renowned and brave general of his time, who stood in high favour with the Emperor. Armed servants guarded the entrances and exits during the sessions, and allowed no one to pass who could not give the password. Well-mounted brethren often went off separately for entire nights, covering a wide area looking for the fallen shooting star. They would bring their booty back to their impatient companions who would place it in a round vessel and keep it there until it turned to gold.[7]

This "fallen shooting star" referred to the morning dew which was believed to come from the perspiration of the stars and was thought to contain the "vital fluid" which was also present in bodily

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[5] H. Kopp, *Die Alchemie*, Part II (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1886), p. 20.
[6] H. Kopp, *Die Alchemie*, p. 20.
[7] Gustav Brabbée, *Sub Rosa—Vertrauliche Mitteilungen aus dem maurerischen Leben userer Grossväter* (Vienna, 1879), quoted in Karl Frick, *Die Erleuchteten* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1973), p. 353. Translation mine.

secretions. An interesting account of the use of dew by a modern alchemist is given by Armand Barbault in his *Gold of a Thousand Mornings* (published in France in 1969 as *L'Or du Millième Matin* and in Britain in 1975).

At the other end of the German-speaking world, in Prussia, alchemy was also extensively practiced. One of its practitioners was Carl Adolf von Carlowitz, a distinguished Prussian nobleman who played a leading part in organizing the defeat of Napoleon at the battle of Leipzig. At his castle of Kuckuckstein at Liebstadt, he had an alchemical laboratory. He was also a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz (by this time under Masonic aegis), as his personal documents show. I am indebted to von Carlowitz's great-great-grandson, Mr. Vidar L'Estrange, for allowing me to inspect certain of his ancestor's papers, among which is a key to the cipher he used in his diaries. Besides many purely Masonic terms, this also contains a code for the term unbekannte Oberen (secret chiefs) which is a Rosicrucian concept. Another code refers to "Goldkochen," the preparation of gold. An obvious question arises here: What were the alchemists, and in particular the Rosicrucian alchemists, trying to do? To answer this requires an understanding of what alchemy is.

Of all the ancient sciences, alchemy has been perhaps the most abused and misunderstood. The popular conception of the alchemist is of someone preoccupied with vain attempts to turn lead or other base metals into gold. But behind the metallurgical strivings of the alchemist, lay a highly complex view of the human spieces and the universe which is still valid today, though it stems from a tradition foreign to orthodox science.

The basic premise of alchemy is embodied in the saying: "As above, so below." In other words, humankind and the natural world are reflections of a pattern in the divine world—"God made man in his own image." Humans, it is held, belong to both the material and the divine world since they contain a spark of the universal spirit which at the original fall became imprisoned in matter. They also have an individual soul and a material body. In alchemical terms, the body, soul, and spirit correspond to salt, sulphur, and mercury, which also represent three universal forces, the Trinity of Christian terminology and the three "Gunas" of the Hindus. By freeing their spirits from the bonds of matter, humans can once again glimpse their lost divine perfection. In this belief, the alchemists belonged to an ancient Gnostic tradition, outlined in chapter 1, which was suppressed by the early Christian church but survived in the Hermetic currents which ran underground through European thought and occasionally, as in the Renaissance, flourished more openly.

This ability to be redeemed and perfected is shared by the world of nature, in which the state of perfection is symbolized by gold. The striving of the alchemist to turn other metals into gold is therefore an

attempt, not at transformation, but essentially at improvement. God, according to the alchemist, has deliberately given access to the spiritual and material means by which perfection can be achieved. These include not only the secret of transmuting metals, but also ways of combating disease and mortality—evils which are, after all, only symptoms of a fall from grace. Hence there is an inner alchemy concerned with perfection of the soul and an outer, complementary, alchemy concerned with perfection of matter and the body.

Alchemists realize that, in order to overcome subservience to matter, they must understand how matter works and master its processes. The three universal forces, they hold, operate through seven channels represented in the heavens by the seven planets and on earth by the seven basic metals. Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn correspond respectively to gold, silver, mercury, copper, iron, tin, and lead. The world of matter itself is divided into four elements: Fire, Earth, Air, and Water.

An essential ingredient in the alchemical process was the Philosopher's Stone, the substance without which the turning to gold could not take place. The Stone was also the elixir of life which could cure disease and ensure longevity. The alchemical texts mention this substance in veiled terms. It is said to be a stone and not a stone, to exist everywhere in nature but, despised or ignored, to be unknown and yet known to everyone.

The process of transformation entailed reduction to a *materia prima*, or "first matter," a basic substance freed of its inessential characteristics. This substance had the capacity to "grow" into gold or other metals when "impregnated" by a universal "vital fluid" corresponding to the Hindu concept of Prana, the breath that animates the universe. This "vital fluid" was attracted by certain "salts" in the body and elsewhere. These salts are present in the bodily secretions and, if the secretions are distilled, the prana-bearing essence can be extracted. It was this thinking that lay behind the formulae for making the elixir out of blood, sweat, urine, and semen.

The use by alchemists of semen and other bodily substances is confirmed by another passage in Gustav Brabbée's book, which describes in horrified terms a group who worked on the principle that the human body is the best retort for producing the elixir. One way in which the group attempted to produce the elixir was by hiring a number of men and women who, in return for a sum of money, were required to eat and drink their fill of the finest food and wine, after which their bodily waste was treated for extraction of the elixir. In the procuring of semen for similar purposes, they were aided by one of their members who was an army officer. In exchange for cash, this man obtained the desired substance from the men under his command. This went on until the men became so weak that the regimental doctor was called in and the cause was revealed by one of the men. Bizarre though these activities may seem, they were a

perfectly logical extension of the premises on which the alchemists were operating.

It is clear that the Rosicrucians of the 18th century had a deep understanding of both inner and outer alchemy, as a scrutiny of their works shows. One of the most interesting of these is *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer (The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians)*, published at Altona in 1785. One of the illustrations in this work is a circular medallion on which are three shields chained together and bearing an eagle, a star, and a lion; there are also two globes representing the Earth and the heavens, an orb, two arms emerging from clouds at the sides of the medallion, and symbols of the seven planets, with the Sun and Moon pouring two streams of liquid into a cup. An accompanying poem explains that the eagle, the lion, and the star represent respectively salt, sulphur, and mercury, as well as body, soul, and spirit.

The orb is a symbol of the highest good, and the two hands represent reason and knowledge. The remaining symbols are self-explanatory. Part of the poem reads:

> This is the meaning of the Art:
> The body giveth form and constancy.
> The soul doth dye and tinge it,
> The spirit maketh it fluid and penetrates it,
> And therefore the Art cannot be
> In one of these three things alone.
> Nor can the greatest secret exist alone;
> It must have body, soul, and spirit.[8]

This image and the accompanying explanation express clearly the dual aspect of alchemy. But, in addition to the inner and outer alchemy which I have described, there is also a third type of alchemy, which is still practiced in the Orient. Here the "vital fluid" upon which the alchemist works is the sexual force itself, as distinct from the physical secretions. In this context, the descriptions of heating the furnace, distillation, and so on symbolize ways of manipulating the generative current. This type of alchemy is clearly described in Lu K'uan Yü's book *Taoist Yoga*. One quotation, from chapter 4, will suffice to bring out the striking similarity between Taoist and European alchemy:

> The body, heart and thought are called "three families". . . .
> The three elements (or factors) can be controlled and re-

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[8] *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer [The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians]* (Altona, Germany, 1785). See Paul M. Allen, *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968). Readers will find the translation on p. 246 and a reproduction of the art on p. 244.

> turned to the one source only in the condition of serene voidness. When the heart is empty of externals spirit and nature unite; and when the body is still, the generative force and passions are extinct. When thought is reduced to the state of serenity, the three factors mingle into one.
>
> When passion and nature unite this is called the union of the elements of metal (chin) and wood (mu). When the generative force and spirit unite this is called the mingling of the elements of water and fire. When thought is stabilised, this is the fullness of the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth).[9]

The three factors referred to here seem to correspond to the salt, sulphur, and mercury of Western alchemy, and the "condition of serene voidness" is surely the reduction to *materia prima*. The reference to the mingling of water and fire is particularly striking, as in European alchemical illustrations, this union is sometimes shown in allegorical form.

Given a sexual interpretation, many of the European alchemical texts seem to make sense. For example, *The Secret Symbols* contains the following passage:

> When I had left the little garden and had arrived at the place where I should assist the maidens, I noticed that instead of the walls there stood a low wattled fence, and a most beautiful maiden bedecked in white satin, with a most splendid youth, went past the rose-garden, one leading the other by the arm and carrying many fragrant roses in their hands. I spoke to them and asked them: How did they come over the fence? She said: My dearest bridegroom helped me over it, and we are now going out of this lovely garden into our chamber to enjoy our friendship.[10]

This could be interpreted as meaning that the rose of perfection can only be plucked when mastery of the sexual force has been attained.

Whether any Europeans practiced anything akin to Taoist alchemy is difficult to establish, but it seems unlikely that the tradition of sexual alchemy was completely unknown in the West. If anything of the kind did exist in Europe, it would account for the extreme care with which alchemical secrets were guarded from the profane—for the use of sex in this way would have been widely regarded with abhorrence in Europe until very recent times.

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[9] Lu K'uan Yü, *Taoist Yoga* (London: Rider, 1970; York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1973), p. 30.

[10] George Engelke, *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1935), p. 45A.

There are other hints of a sexual dimension to Rosicrucianism as well. The Comte de Gabalis speaks of "marriage" with elemental spirits. Elias Ashmole and Thomas Vaughan appear to have used sex in a magical way, and later Paschal Beverly Randolph was to do the same. At what precise point the theme of sexuality entered the Rosicrucian tradition it is difficult to say, but it is not apparent or obvious in its early phase. I shall be returning to this theme later.

While on the subject of Rosicrucianism and alchemy, I should mention that there is a possible link between Rosicrucianism and the emergence of homoeopathic medicine. The originator of homoeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, lived from 1755 to 1843. One of the few things known about his life is that he was a Freemason and, given the direction of his interests, it is likely that he was also a member of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The basic principle of homoeopathy, that "like cures like," did not come out of the blue, but built on similar ideas already expressed by Paracelsus. Certainly homoeopathy, in its holistic character, is very much in keeping with the spirit of Rosicrucianism.[11]

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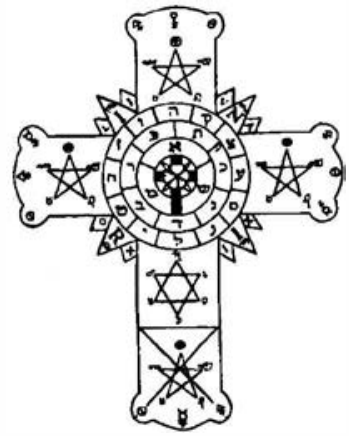
[11] See Elizabeth Danciger, *The Emergence of Homeopathy* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1987).



Chapter 7

The Golden and Rosy Cross

A member of the Royal House of Prussia, who had recently distinguished himself in the Bavarian campaign against Austria, became a candidate for admission to the brotherhood of the Golden and Rosy Cross in 1781. To the Rosicrucians, he was an important recruit, for he was soon to sit on the throne as Frederick-William II, successor to his uncle, Frederick the Great. His initiation into the brotherhood was to have far-reaching consequences which will be discussed shortly. First, it may be helpful to understand the nature of the society into which he was enticed. The Gold- und Rosenkreuz was a remarkable phenomenon, a kind of Golden Dawn of its day, which brought together many elements and produced the first identifiable Rosicrucian organization (again I refer the reader to *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*, in which I deal in greater detail with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz).

It is important to emphasize here that there were really two orders of the Golden and Rosy Cross which followed one another. The first was the loose alchemical brotherhood described in the previous chapter. The second was a Masonic off-shoot which took over the name Gold- und Rosenkreuz (Golden and Rosy Cross).

This second order represents the coming together and intermingling of a number of different traditions and influences. The soil out of which it sprang was partly alchemical and partly Masonic. In order to understand it fully, it is therefore necessary to plunge for a while into the labyrinthine world of continental Masonry in the 18th century, with all its complicated branches and off-shoots.

In England, the earliest reference to a "speculative" Masonic lodge—as opposed to associations of working masons—is an entry in the diary of Elias Ashmole, which records that Ashmole was admitted as a member of a Masonic lodge at Warrington in Lancashire,

on 16 October 1646.[1] There is, however, a reliable reference in Scotland which records the admission of Sir Robert Moray to a lodge at Edinburgh on May 20, 1641.[2] This is probably the earliest record of a speculative Masonic lodge, though undoubtedly there were such lodges in existence long before this date.

When and where Freemasonry began is not known, but the date when it became firmly established was 1717 when the Grand Lodge of London was founded. The Grand Lodge rapidly developed into the central governing body of British Masonry and, despite some friction and the formation of splinter groups, it remains so today. The existence of this central authority gave a coherence and stability to British Masonry which makes its history comparatively straightforward. On the Continent, however, no such central authority existed. The history of continental Masonry is as a result, one of bewildering complexity.

It was in France that Masonry first took hold outside Britain. The earliest French lodges appear to have been formed in the 1720s; in 1756, a Grand Lodge of France was founded. The progress of the craft of Masonry as a British export was facilitated by the presence on the Continent of Scottish and Irish Jacobite exiles. One of these was a romantic figure, the Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay (1696–1743). Stemming from humble origins in Ayrshire, Ramsay took a degree at Edinburgh University, later acquired a knowledge of French, and became a kind of learned adventurer, moving freely among the French aristocracy, acting as tutor to the Old Pretender's son in Rome yet, strangely, remaining sufficiently *persona grata* in England to be offered the post of tutor to the Duke of Cumberland, third son of George II (a post which he refused).

Ramsay was extremely active as a Freemason and became Chancellor of the Grand Lodge of France. It was in this capacity that he gave a speech to the general assembly of the lodge that was published in 1737 and which set out Ramsay's theories on the origins of the craft. According to Ramsay, the Crusades had a Masonic inspiration, their purpose being to restore the Temple of the Christians in the Holy Land and "to employ themselves in bringing back their architecture to its first institution."[3] In order to do this, Ramsay explained, "they agreed upon several ancient signs and symbolic words drawn from the well of religion in order to recognise themselves amongst the heathen and Saracens. . . . Some time afterwards our Order formed an intimate union with the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This union was made after the example set by

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[1] C. H. Josten, *The Diaries of Elias Ashmole*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 33–34.

[2] D. C. Martin, "Sir Robert Moray," in *The Royal Society*, H. Hartley, ed., p. 246.

[3] R. F. Gould, *The History of Freemasonry: Its Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions, Customs.* 4 vols. (London, 1886; New York, Cincinnati and Chicago: John C. Yorston & Co., 1885).

the Israelites when they erected the second Temple who, whilst they handled the trowel and mortar with one hand, in the other held the sword and buckler."[4] This supposed connection with the Knights of St. John led later and even more fertile imaginations to associate Masonry with the suppressed Order of the Templars.

In other pronouncements, Ramsay asserted the existence of an ancient Masonic tradition in Scotland which had preserved the purity of the craft as it degenerated elsewhere. Thus, in the minds of many continental Masons, the word "Scottish" came to have a special prestige, and new Masonic rites seeking to justify innovation often raised the "Scottish" banner. The result was the birth of a strange progeny, by Ramsay out of French Masonry, which became an *enfant terrible* to those who wished to keep Masonry on an even keel. The term "Scottish Masonry," which was given to this offspring, covers an immense proliferation of rites, characterized by exotic ceremonies and grandiose titles. The Paris Grand Lodge was increasingly unable to control this luxuriant growth and consequent erosion of its authority.

Along with orthodox Masonry, Scottish Masonry spread from France all over Europe. Indeed, although Masonry was originally a British creation, it was the French version which gained the largest following on the Continent. However, of all the countries into which the craft penetrated, Germany was the one where Scottish Masonry and its off-shoots found the most fertile soil.

The most influential of the German "Scottish" Masonic rites was the Strict Observance, founded by Karl Gotthelf, Baron Hund, in 1764, which stressed the supposed Templar derivation and claimed that the Germans were the true recipients of the authentic Templar tradition. It also made great use of alchemical symbolism and held out the promise of attaining the secrets of transmutation. With its combination of nationalistic and occult appeal, the Strict Observance flourished.

An even more exotic rite was the Clerks Templar, founded by the pastor Johann August Starck, who claimed that it was not the knights but the clerks of the Templar order who were the true custodians of the order's secrets, including the art of transmutation.

At this point, the traditions of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry met and mingled. Those who sought more in the way of alchemical studies than the Strict Observance or the Clerks Templar offered were naturally drawn to the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross. The result was the spawning of a new rite of Rosicrucian Freemasonry.

Apart from the pursuit of alchemical knowledge, another important characteristic drew people to the new Rosicrucian order: its political stance. Rosicrucianism in the late 18th century be-

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[4] R. F. Gould, *The History of Freemasonry*.

came a rallying point for those who were of conservative outlook who were opposed to the socially radical, rationalistic, and even anti-religious tendencies which were becoming a serious challenge in Germany.

There were Masonic and pseudo-Masonic orders ranged on both sides of a political fence which spanned such a wide spectrum of political opinion it is sometimes difficult to tell one end from the other. For example, Adam Weishaupt's Bavarian order, the Illuminati, belonged decidedly to the progressive, rationalist camp. Yet the term *Illuminés* is used by a French writer of the era to refer to the obscurantist faction. And the Emperor Frederick the Great, who in practice was anything but radical, was a member of a Masonic lodge of French egalitarian persuasion. On the whole, however, Masonry tended to have a radical connotation, and the new Rosicrucian order was the conservatives' way of playing the radical Masons at their own game.

A further element in the appeal of the Rosicrucian order was its ability to fulfill a need for those who were dissatisfied with the new rationalism, yet felt unable to return to the austerity of Lutheran orthodoxy or yield to the Church of Rome with its tempting ritual, mystique, and dogmatic authority. In Rosicrucianism they found an effective answer. Thus, the success of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was due to three main factors: (1) the promise of secret knowledge held out to a privileged elite; (2) the function of the order as a conservative focal point; (3) the appeal of the order as a religious substitute.

The origins of the Masonic Gold- und Rosenkreuz are obscure, but one of the names linked with its formation is that of Hermann Fictuld, a mysterious figure about whom little is known apart from the fact that he was the author of a series of alchemical works that later became required reading among members of the order. The name Fictuld is thought to have been a pseudonym, possibly for Schmidt or Mummenthaler. In one of his works, *Aureum Vellus* (written in 1747 and published in 1749), Fictuld writes of a "Society of the Golden Rosicrucians," who were the inheritors of the Golden Fleece, and in all of his subsequent writings this order is given an important role. Possibly in 1747, Fictuld, through his interest in alchemy, came into contact with the secret and loosely organized alchemical fraternity calling itself the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, about which I have already speculated. Fictuld then possibly gave this fraternity a more coherent organization or else started a new group of his own under the old name. The statutes of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz state that the order was to be reformed every ten years. These reforms took place in 1767 and 1777. It is safe to assume, therefore, that the society was founded in either 1757 or 1747. Arnold Marx, in his book on the Gold- und Rosenkreuz (published in 1929), states his belief that 1757 was the year of formation.

This order developed within the fold of Freemasonry and, in its early days, flourished mainly in the southern part of the German-speaking world, with centers in such places as Vienna, Hof, Frankfurt-am-Main, Marburg, Kassel, Regensburg, and in the outpost of Prague. One of its most active centers was the small Dukedom of Sulzbach in the Upper Palatinate, whose rulers, especially Duke Christian August (1622–1702), had shown an interest in mystical speculations. At this court, a remarkable ensemble of mystical scholars gathered, including the Hebraist and Qabalist Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689), and the physician Francis Mercurius van Helmont (1618–1699), also a Qabalist. Sulzbach was also a publishing center for occult and mystical works and had a Hebrew press which issued Qabalistic and other Jewish works.

Knorr and Helmont played an important part in disseminating the idea of the divine origin of the Hebrew language, attributing to it a special elemental power which was the basic language of the species. This view was set out in Helmont's book *Alphabeti vere Naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineato* [A Short Delineation of the True Natural Alphabet of Hebrew], published in 1667. Knorr, in a foreword to the book, proposed the formation of a Hebrew language society, along the lines of the German language societies like the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft and Deutschgesinnte Genossenschaft (of which Knorr was a member).

Because of Hebrew's divine origin, these societies argued, it accorded more closely with nature than any other language. It was, therefore, Knorr believed, capable of opening the secrets of nature, including the recipe for making gold. A knowledge of Hebrew was, according to Knorr, indispensable for the alchemical adept.

This preoccupation with Hebrew became a familiar part of the Rosicrucian way of thinking, as did the doctrine of reincarnation in which Helmont believed and which landed him for a time in a prison of the Inquisition during a visit to Rome.

The importance attached to alchemy, which distinguished the Gold- und Rosenkreuz from the older Rosicrucians, was due in large measure to people like Knorr and Helmont. Alchemy was also practiced at the Sulzbach court.

In view of the tradition of occult study established in Sulzbach in the 17th century by Knorr, Helmont, and Herzog Albrecht, it is not surprising that, in the second half of the 18th century, the duchy became a center for the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The leader of the Rosicrucian circle there was Dr. Bernhard Joseph Schleiss von Löwenfeld (1731–1800), who became court physician at Sulzbach after service in the Seven Years' War and was eventually made a count. Besides a number of medical writings, Schleiss also wrote two works in defense of the Rosicrucians.

Grassl, in his book on mystical and occult trends in Bavaria, *Aufbruch zur Romantik*, writes of Schleiss' circle:

> Referring to the work of Knorr and Helmont, Schleiss also spoke how the true spiritual teaching, "the genuine Qabalah" was to be obtained from the alphabet of nature. . . . From the Qabalah came the important teachings of the order: the Tree of the Ten Sephiroth, the doctrine of numbers, the concept of the Quaternary . . . the idea of "Adam Kadmon," which gives rise to the problematical androgynous state of mankind, the prophetic interpretation of the Holy Script, the "Original Language" as the source of a "romantic" traditionalism, as well as certain concerns of alchemy such as the transmutation of metals and the "primal matter". . . . In the "natural alphabet" of the Holy Language there was frequent mention of the "ancient Ophir," the laboratory of the illuminated Cabalist which alone was capable of producing gold. This now became the secret of the order, revealed only to the higher grades. The connection is confirmed by the brotherhood name of Wöllner, the director of the order in Berlin. He was known as Ophiron and also Chrysophiron, like the alchemist in Knorr von Rosenroth's *Conjugium Phoebi et Palladis*.[5]

Thus, in the transition from the Rosy Cross to the Golden and Rosy Cross, there was an increase in the role of alchemy—a process which, as Karl Frick points out, was reversed in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to alchemy, the Sulzbach Rosicrucians also took up the practice of exorcism—the driving out of demons in order to cure certain afflictions.

Another important center of Rosicrucian activity developed at Marburg. Here the leading exponent was Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm Schröder (1733–1778), Professor of Medicine at Marburg University, and a distinguished doctor with strong mystical and alchemical leanings. Soon after his arrival in Marburg in 1764, Schröder entered the Masonic lodge of the Three Lions. In 1765, he is believed to have established a Rosicrucian chapter within the lodge. In addition to alchemical works, he also wrote a book of instruction for members of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

As mentioned already, there were numerous Rosicrucian centers scattered over southern Germany, Austria, Hungary, and northern Italy. In northern Germany, the main centers were Berlin and Hamburg. It was in Hamburg that there appeared, in 1785, the influential work, *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer (Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians)*, which contained many alchemical illustrations, as well as an account of the order's teachings. The author is unknown.

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[5] Hans Grassl, *Aufbruch zur Romantik: Bayers Beitrag zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte 1765–1785* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968). Translation mine.

Many works of a similar nature circulated among members of the order during the course of its life. They included *Compass der Weisen* [Compass of the Wise], first published in 1799 and consisting mostly of an unoriginal compilation of earlier alchemical and Rosicrucian material, with some additional interesting plates. The authorship of this work is uncertain. It has been attributed to a Baron Proek, but Schleiss von Löwenfeld probably also had a hand in it, as the foreword dealing with the Order's origins mentions Sulzbach, near which was a cave where Druids used to meet.

An even more important textbook of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabalisticum et Theologicum*, first published at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1719. The work appeared originally under the name Gregorius Anglus Sallwigt, probably a pseudonym for Welling, but possibly the name of an author whose text Welling edited. The book was later greatly enlarged by Welling and others, and the extended version was published in 1735, after Welling's death. There were further editions in 1760 and 1784. The work deals with the three basic substances of the alchemical process, salt, sulphur, and mercury, and contains some fine symbolic illustrations, a number of which were reproduced without acknowledgment of their source by Hargrave Jennings in *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries*.[6] Welling's *Opus* is a rather confusing work; even as great a mind as Goethe found it hard to understand when he studied it in 1769. Nevertheless, it became perhaps the most important instruction book used by the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

The reform of 1767 took place at a time when the order was already in upheaval. In October 1766, an Imperial decree banned Rosicrucianism in the Austrian empire. This also affected the entire order throughout greater Germany. Fictuld, who until then had been the movement's leading spirit, was obliged to take refuge at Innsbruck, and his influence declined. A new generation—Schleiss, Schröder, and others—took over the leadership, and new ideas came to the fore that were incorporated in the 1767 reform. The legend of the Templar origins of Rosicrucianism was dropped, and the Bible was given a more central place in the teachings. Furthermore, the organization itself was tightened. Henceforth, the individual branches were known as circles and were allowed to have not more than nine members; each was headed by a Director. The next constitutional reform of the order took place in 1777. The system of grades and rituals used by the order during this period is recorded in a document dating from 1767 and reproduced in *Rosenkreuzerey*, by I. A. Fessler.[7] To qualify for admission, a candidate had to pass

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[6] Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries* (London: Chatto, 1879).
[7] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery* (1805–1806), one of a series of pamphlets on different rites, published privately by Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, a prominent German Freemason.

through the first three grades of orthodox Masonry, entered apprentice, fellow craft, and master, which the Rosicrucians claimed were merely a preliminary to higher knowledge.

The history of the order is described as follows by the author of the 1767 document:

> Although the ancient fathers and wise masters have met together ever since the beginning of the world and separated themselves from the profane masses, it was only in the time of Moses that the order laid down a rule of the highest secrecy in Egypt and in the wastes of Arabia. During and after the Babylonian captivity the brotherhood was established in Syria. And in the time of Solomon the classification or division was established. In the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries the whole brotherhood was reformed and finally given its present constitution. But, in order that the Chiefs might better conceal their aims and more easily ascertain men's eagerness for knowledge, the three lowest grades of freemasonry were established as a nursery to the higher sciences.[8]

There follows a description of the nine Rosicrucian grades, designated according to the following Qabalistic enumeration:

1	9	Junior
2	8	Theoreticus
3	7	Practicus
4	6	Philosophus
5	5	Minor
6	4	Major
7	3	Adeptus Exemptus
8	2	Magister
9	1	Majus

This document, to my knowledge, is the earliest published reference to these nine grades. They were later described in *Der Rosenkreuzer in seiner Blösse* [The Rosicrucian Revealed] by Magister Pianco (a.k.a. Hans Heinrich von Ecker und Eckhoffen), published in 1781. This later description of the grades was copied wholesale by Kenneth Mackenzie in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (1877) and thence passed, with minor alterations, into the modern ritual magic tradition.

The document I have quoted lists each grade's name, number, sign, color, and word; the name of its chief; the land where its mem-

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[8] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.

bers are to be found; the chief's residence; the place and intervals of meetings; the number of circles designating the grade; the science pursued by the members; and last, but not least, the cost of admission. The attributes of the Junior grade are as follows:

> Number: 909.
> Sign: a ring with characters.
> Color: gold.
> Word: Aesch.
> Name of chief: Pereclinus de Faustis.
> Land: they are scattered everywhere.
> Residence of chief: Jusprunk.
> Meeting place: undetermined; they meet every two years.
> Circles: they have nine.
> Science: they are pupils.
> Cost of admission: three gold marks.[9]

The description of the highest grade, that of Majus, suitably reflects the grade's exalted position:

> Number 7. Signs: Urim and Thummin and Schemhamphorasch.
> Colors: gleaming and fiery.
> Word: Jehova.
> Name of chief: Lucianus Rinaldus de Perfectis.
> Lands: Egypt, Persia, Italy, Spain, England, Holland, and Germany.
> Residences: Hassan, Jepasan, Venice, Madrid, London, Amsterdam, and Cologne.
> Meeting place: Smyrna, every ten years.
> Circles: one.
> Science: nothing is hidden from them; they are masters of everything, like Moses, Aaron, Hermes, and Hiram Abif.
> Cost of admission: 99 gold marks.[10]

Presumably the high entrance fee would not deter someone who had reached the level of Hermes. Such an adept would be able to manufacture any quantity of gold with his Philosopher's Stone, and 99 marks would be child's play to him.

The identity of members of the order's higher echelons remained secret. The concept of near-superhuman secret chiefs *(unbekannte Oberen)* seems to date from this period, and it was to become a favorite motif among later occult groups, such as Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society with its Tibetan Mahatmas.

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[9] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.
[10] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.

These chiefs were credited with miraculous powers to which, in lesser degree, the lower ranks of the order could also aspire. Indeed, belief in these powers was regarded as a proof of one's worthiness as a member of the brotherhood. A leading Gold- und Rosenkreuzer, Johann Christoph Wöllner, of whom more shall be said later, is reported to have written to a fellow Rosicrucian brother telling him to stop doubting that the adepts of the eighth degree had the power to hatch chickens out of hard-boiled eggs.[11]

Before they could hope to be endowed with such powers, however, candidates had first to pass through the preliminary grades of the order, involving elaborate initiation rituals. Fessler's pamphlet, *Rosenkreuzerey*, describes in detail the ritual for initiation to the grade of Theoreticus. Candidates are let into a room and there dressed in the apparel of a Scottish master. They then knock at the door of an adjoining room where they are received by a member who greets them with the words: "Heartfelt greetings thrice times three, dear Brother!" This member examines them in the Scottish sign, grip, and word, and gives them "the usual fourfold kiss." After this, candidates purify themselves symbolically by washing their hands before knocking at the door of the innermost sanctum, to which they are admitted, accompanied by the other member.

Here, they find themselves in a room lit by candles and closed to all daylight. At the far end, stands a square table covered with a black cloth, on which lies an open bible; beside it are the statues, register, and chief's instructions, as well as a black-edged apron and a ceremonial jewel. Behind the table sits the chief, with two other officials at black-covered tables to the right and left. In front of the main table, a carpet is spread out with symbolic figures on it and three lighted candles distributed around the edge.

Candidates are led forward by a companion. On the table immediately in front of them stands a seven-branched candlestick containing lighted candles. The chief looks at the candidiate silently for a few moments, then begins the following catechism:

Chief: What grade in Masonry have you reached?
Candidate: I am a Scottish master.
Chief: What more do you ask for?
Candidate: To receive higher knowledge.
Chief: Answer my questions sincerely and honestly. Have you truly fulfilled the duties of a Scottish master?
Candidate: Yes.
Chief: Have you improved your mind and will through the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice?

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[11] H. Kopp, *Die Alchemie*, Part II (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1886), p. 40. The person to whom Wöllner wrote was Brother Sacerdos, alias Freiherr von Schröder, yet another of the many Schröder's connected with the order.

Candidate: Yes.
Chief: Do you have a yearning for wisdom?
Candidate: Yes.
Chief: What is the beginning of wisdom?
Candidate: The fear of God.[12]

Candidates are then asked to state what conception they have of God and how they are disposed toward their fellow men. Having been satisfied on these points, the chief declares:

> Very well, brotherly love demands that we grant your request. If it pleases God, your patience, trouble, and work will be rewarded with success. Here, however, you must lay aside your superfluous fineries, thereby remembering that on your first reception as a Mason you were divested of all metals, which signifies in moral terms the laying aside of the Old Adam and the striving toward the ways of the god-fearing.[13]

The candidate then lays aside hat, sword, coat, and the other trappings of a Scottish master. The chief stands, approaches the candidates, and removes the latters' shoes, saying to each: "Dear Brother, learn through my action to recognize that humility reigns with us also." Returning to the seat, the chief says: "My Brother, step onto the globe that is shown on the carpet."

This globe is depicted in the middle of the carpet and is surrounded by two circles. From the outermost circle emanates a series of rays, ending in a ring of clouds in which appear the signs of the seven planets: the Sun and Moon in full splendor, then the hieroglyphs for Mercury, Saturn, Mars, Venus, and Jupiter, each surrounded by two interlaced triangles. Above the symbol for Mars is a cubic stone and below it a rough, unhewn stone. Opposite Saturn is a circle divided by a perpendicular line and, opposite Venus, one cut by a horizontal line. Between the Sun and Moon, and facing the candidate, who stands in the middle, is a flaming star, flanked by the compasses and set square.

At the order of the chief, the secretary reads the opening of the Gospel of St. John ("In the beginning was the Word," etc.), after which the chief asks candidates if they believe in the manifestation of the Work. Having replied in the affirmative, the candidates are asked to put a finger on the gospel and repeat the following oath:

> I, _____, swear freely and with due deliberation to worship as long as I live the eternal and almighty Jehova in

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[12] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.
[13] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.

> spirit and in truth and to strive as far as possible to recognize his power and wisdom through nature; to renounce the vanities of the world; and, as far as it lies in my power, to provide for my brothers, to love them, to stand by them in their needs both in word and action; and finally to maintain an unbreakable silence. As truly as God is eternal.[14]

All members then say together: "To thee alone, O Jehova, be honor! Thou art the beginning, the middle, and the end, for thou livest from eternity to eternity. Amen."

Candidates return to their former places, and the secretary puts on their shoes for them. They are then led to the chief who bestows on each an apron and jewel.

The chief then reveals the sign and gesture of the grade and its word, which is "Chaos," and explains the significance of the symbols on the carpet. The planets, for instance, were created as an instrument for the four elemental powers to send their influence to the Earth and bring about the creation of the seven metals. The flaming star represents Nature, the breath of God, the Universal and Central Fire which enlivens, sustains, and destroys all things. The two circles divided perpendicularly and horizontally signify respectively the active, or male, and the passive, or female, principles in the universe. The unhewn stone is the base matter of the philosophers. The square and compasses signify proportion, weight, and mass in nature. The three candles represent the lights of reason, nature, and revelation. The four corners of the carpet symbolize the four elements. The seven-branched candlestick stands for the seven gifts of wisdom which every brother must ask from God. The globe in the middle denotes the true lodge which the philosophers establish with diligence and work in the very center. With this explanation of symbols the main part of the proceeding ends, and the lodge is then formally closed.

As initiates rose upwards through the grades of the order they were required to make a diligent study of alchemy and to read the works of such authors as Basil Valentine, Arnold de Villanova, and Raymond Lully. They were also given manuscripts containing alchemical formulas which they were obliged to carry out at their own expense, reporting on the results. One such manuscript was the *Thesaurus Thesaurorum a Fraternitate Rosae et Aureae Crucis*, which I mentioned in the previous chapter. When members were sufficiently versed in the theory of alchemy, they were allowed to take part in practical experiments, an activity that was not without its dangers. Two members of the Berlin circle, for instance, were killed working with dangerous chemicals in the laboratory.

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[14] I. A. Fessler, *Rosenkreuzery*. Translation mine.

The ultimate purpose of the society is described in another manual of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz: *Eingang zur ersten Classe des preisswürdigsten Ordens vom Goldenen Rosen Creutze nach der letzten Haupt- und Reformations-Convention* (reproduced in J. J. Bode's *Starke Erweise*, 1788). The aim of the society, according to this document, is among other things, "to make effective the hidden forces of nature, to release nature's light which has become deeply buried beneath the dross resulting from the curse, and thereby to light within every brother a torch by whose light he will be able better to recognize the hidden God . . . and thereby become more closely united with the original source of light."[15]

This passage confirms, once again, the Gnostic character of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. The reference to light which has been buried in dross as a result of a primal curse, or fall, is very similar to the kind of language used by the Gnostic sects of the early Christian era.

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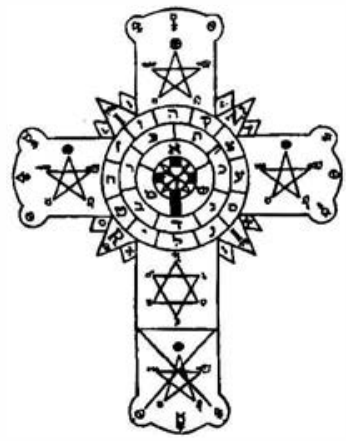
[15] J. J. Bode, *Starke Erweise* ("Rom, 5555," i.e., Leipzig: Göschen, 1788). Contains the Gold- und Rosenkreuz "Eingang zur ersten Classe des preisswürdigsten Ordens vom Goldenen Rosen Creutze nach der letzten Haupt- und Reformations-Convention," p. 25.



Chapter 8

A Rosicrucian Monarch

As often happens with a movement, the Gold- und Rosenkreuz enjoyed a last upsurge of power and influence before its final decline. It was during this Indian Summer that the King of Prussia became a member of the order. His involvement with it is one of the most curious stories in the history of secret societies.

The man who brought Prince Frederick-William into the fraternity was Johann Rudolf von Bischoffswerder (1741–1803). He came from a noble Thuringian family. His father, who died in 1754, had a distinguished military career, ending as *aide-de-camp* to Marshall de Saxe. Bischoffswerder, after studying law, decided to follow his father's example, serving for the latter part of the Seven Years' War (1760–1763) as an officer in the Prussian cavalry. After the war, he became stablemaster and chamberlain to Charles, Duke of Kurland, and, in 1764, was initiated into Strict Observance Masonry under the ceremonial name of Eques a Grypho.

Bischoffswerder did not, however, find in the Strict Observance the occult knowledge he was seeking. He became acquainted with a self-professed alchemist and Rosicrucian named Johann Georg Schrepfer, owner of a coffee house in Leipzig. Schrepfer committed suicide in 1774, but, before doing so, bequeathed to Bischoffswerder a machine for causing spirits to appear and a tincture for sustaining youth and strength. It may have been Schrepfer's influence that caused Bischoffswerder to be drawn toward Rosicrucianism. At any rate, he joined the Gold- und Rosenkreuz on Christmas Eve, 1779. His letters at this period display a yearning for higher knowledge: "I sometimes see a speck of light, but it is too weak to penetrate to the truth." He was also a man of genuine Christian piety: "I beg the Eter-

nal Almighty daily, nay hourly, to bestow upon me a Christian rebirth."[1]

At the outbreak of the so-called "Potato War" against Austria in 1778, Bischoffswerder rejoined the Prussian army and found himself in Bavaria as a captain under Prince Henry of Bohemia. When, at the end of the war, he was attached as a major to the suite of Frederick-William, Prince of Prussia, he received an instruction from the head of the Berlin Rosicrucians, Duke Frederick August of Braunschweig-Oels (Brother Rufus in the order), to the effect that he must try to win the Prince over to fraternity.

The task was not difficult to accomplish. Shortly after the end of the campaign in 1779, Frederick-William succumbed to a serious illness, during which he was carefully looked after by Major Bischoffswerder. This afforded Bischoffswerder an ideal opportunity to influence the Prince. A man of imposing size and powerful physique combined with charm, refined manners and a cultured mind. Bischoffswerder's dignified bearing was well adapted to give the impression that some unseen power sustained him. The Prince was soon anxious to know more about this power. Bischoffswerder obliged him by administering a "secret elixir," whose recipe was known only to the brotherhood. When the Prince recovered soon afterward, he was convinced of the truth of Bischoffswerder's claims and anxious to join the order. He was acceptable as a candidate, since he was already a member of the Masonic lodge of the Golden Keys.

After a year's probation, the Prince was accepted and initiated into the Rosicrucian order on 8 August 1781. Like all other members of the order, he was given a special name—Ormesus Magnus. Bischoffswerder became his immediate superior in the brotherhood and, from then on, was his inseparable companion. After Frederick-William ascended the throne, Bischoffswerder exercised a strong influence over Prussian foreign policy and promoted a counter-revolutionary crusade against French Jacobinism.

The speech of welcome on the Prince's initiation was given by Johann Christoph Wöllner (1732–1800), who was destined to have an even stronger influence on Frederick-William. Unlike his colleague Bischoffswerder, Wöllner came from humble origins. The son of a Lutheran pastor, he studied theology and was ordained. In 1759, however, he left his pastoral career and took a job managing the estates of the widow of a certain General Itzenplitz in the Mark Brandenburg. Devoting his spare time to writing books and articles on agriculture, he became a recognized authority on the subject. In his early years, there was little indication of his later esoteric interests.

In 1766, Wöllmer married the daughter of his employer, with the latter's approval. At that time, such marriages between the

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[1] K. Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

classes were generally taboo, and some members of the family successfully appealed to Frederick the Great to forbid the match. But it was too late; by the time the royal messenger arrived, the marriage had already been consummated twenty-four hours earlier. The best that could be done was to investigate Wöllner to see if he had won the girl's hand through improper pressure. No evidence for this was found, and the marriage had to be accepted. Wöllner, in fact, proved a devoted husband, and the couple lived happily together for thirty years.

Wöllner's adroit piece of social climbing earned him the dislike of Frederick the Great, however, who from then on considered him *persona non grata* at court. This treatment left its mark on Wöllner. When he became a power behind the throne of the next monarch, he must have derived some satisfaction from reversing many of Frederick's policies.

While cold-shouldered by Frederick's court, Wöllner found some outlet for his ambitions in Freemasonry, which he joined in 1765, rising quickly to the office of *praepositus* of the five lodges of the Berlin perfecture. In due course, he became a knight of the Strict Observance, under the name of Eques a Cubo. Like Bischoffswerder, however, Wöllner found that Masonry did not satisfy his desire to learn occult secrets. He therefore joined the Rosicrucians and soon became chief organizer for northern Germany and *Oberhauptdirektor* in charge of twenty-six circles comprising a total of 200 members. Operating from Berlin under a variety of exotic names—Heliconus, Ophiron, Chrysophiron—he worked hard to integrate Freemasonry with Rosicrucianism.

Wöllner was soon raised to the eighth degree, but complained to friends that the magi had refused to initiate him into the final mysteries of the grade. Wöllner, as mentioned earlier, believed that the eighth-degree adepts could hatch chickens from hard-boiled eggs. Now, to his chagrin, he evidently found that they were not going to tell him the secret of how this was accomplished.

If such powers were beyond him, however, a more worldly power soon came within Wöllner's grasp, for when Frederick-William ascended the throne in 1786, he became the new king's economic advisor and was raised to the nobility. He and Bischoffswerder were, moreover, Frederick-William's daily confidants, drafting speeches, accompanying the king on journeys, and advising him on appointments. In order to understand the hold that these two Rosicrucian adepts had over their royal brother, it is necessary to know something of the king's character and personality.

Frederick-William was a man of pleasing physique, gracious manners, and considerable personal charm. He was devoted to the arts; Beethoven and Mozart were among those who enjoyed his patronage. His private orchestra had a European reputation. But in character, he was weak and indecisive. Nor did he make up in expe-

rience what he lacked in determination, for Frederick the Great had neglected his nephew's education and contemptuously refused to give him any steady government responsibilities that might have prepared him for the throne. In short, Frederick-William was ill-equipped to take on the government of a state accustomed to the immense capabilities and iron hand of Frederick the Great. As Epstein points out in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*: He attempted to rule as an absolute monarch while really lacking the strength and ability required for playing this role. . . . Vacillation was the keynote of his reign: personal insecurity its cause.[2]

Fredrick-William sought release from the burden of kingship in promiscuity, and his sexual activities became notorious. His first marriage (1765–1769) ended in divorce, after a scandal involving both parties. The second (1769) was more successful, but did not prevent his taking as a mistress Wilhelmine Enke, a woman of strong intellect and even stronger ambition, the daughter of a trumpet-blower who was technically married to a royal valet named Rietz. She was later given the title of Countess von Lichtenau. Not content with a mistress, however, the king insisted on a bigamous marriage with the Countess von Voss. After her death in 1789, a second bigamous alliance was contracted with the Countess von Dönhoff (1790). The latter, however, quarreled with her rival, the Countess von Lichtenau, and was banished from Court.

Frederick-William combined this licentious private existence with a public zeal for religion and morality—a combination which is neither as paradoxical nor as uncommon as it might seem. In Frederick's case, however, his scandalous private life, which was in fact public knowledge, served only to underline the hypocrisy of his public crusade and so undermined the prestige of the Prussian crown.

Frederick-William also sought relief from his kingly duties in the search for mystical and occult experience. His Rosicrucian mentors, Wöllner and Bischoffswerder, found ways to satisfy these yearnings and at the same time to influence the king in the ways they wanted. Seances were arranged and Bischoffswerder's machine for summoning spirits was pressed into service. At one of these seances, held in the Charlottenburg Castle, the ghost of his namesake Frederick-William, the "Great Elector" of Brandenburg (1620–1688), was made to appear and extract from the king a promise that he would break off relations with his mistress.[3]

Wöllner's influence was most strongly felt in the field of religion. In 1785, he had produced a work entitled *Adhandlung über die Religion* [Treatise on Religion] for the Crown Prince, which de-

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[2] K. Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism*.

[3] H. Kopp, *Die Alchemie* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1886), p. 27.

scribed in detail the religious program for the coming reign. In it, he declared that religion was necessary for the greatness of a state. Prussia, he argued, had sunk into irreligion, and this defect must be remedied. While condemning persecution of one sect by another, he urged the suppression of anti-religious propaganda. It was the so-called *Aufklärer*, the "Enlighteners," who were his main *bête noire*. In order to bring Prussia back to religion, three things were necessary. First, the king must be ostentatious in his piety; second, he must prohibit irreligious writings; third, he must appoint an "honest man" to direct the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

In his last recommendation, Wöllner clearly had himself in mind. It was not until three years later, however, on 3 July 1788, that he finally realized his ambition and became Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Once in this post, he was quick to act. Six days after his appointment, an Edict Concerning Religion was issued requiring orthodoxy among preachers. In December of the same year, an Edict of Censorship was issued, repressing irreligious writings. Opposition to these measures was fierce, and Wöllner's attempts to stifle criticism were not very successful. Finally, to enforce his policy, Wöllner created, in May 1791, a kind of Protestant Inquisition, the *Immediat-examinations-Kommission*, whose two most active members were Gottlob Friedrich Hillmer (1756–1835) and the Silesian preacher Hermann Daniel Hermes, both Rosicrucians. The *Kommission* set up a sort of ecclesiastical secret police to report on deviant theology professors, preachers, and schoolteachers.

For a while, the dissident voices were silenced, but not for long. When Hermes and Hillmer were touring Prussian universities to check on the orthodoxy of their theology faculties, they were met at Halle by rioting students and forced to beat a retreat. When an attempt was made to punish the offenders, it was found to be not quite so easy. The university authorities refused to accept responsibility. By this time, the antics of Hermes and Hillmer had become a source of embarrassment to Wöllner. The king had become tired of the whole business and, in the end, the case had to be dropped.

By 1794, the king must have become dubious about the success of Wöllner's efforts. He criticized the latter for his lack of zeal—a strange criticism when, if anything, Wöllner had been guilty of an excess of zeal. After that, Wöllner was never fully restored to favor.

Though Wöllner has often been harshly treated by historians, he was a man of honesty who believed that what he was doing was right. Leaving aside his religious activities, Wöllner did much to put right the harsh conditions of the poor that had existed under Frederick the Great. It is to his credit that he never used his power to make himself rich, and he died a comparatively poor man.

Bischoffswerder was also, in his way, an honest man. Less unpopular than Wöllner because he was less in the public eye, he nonetheless never sought any civilian government post for himself.

He was content to serve as *aide-de-camp* to the king and had become a major-general by the time of Frederick-William's death. Epstein has remarked, of Wöllner and Bischoffswerder, that "they may be described as the first self-consciously conservative politicians in German history, politicians in the honourable sense of the term—men eager for power for the sake of implementing their principles."

The power of these two men disappeared with the death of Frederick-William in 1797. When his son, Frederick-William III, came to the throne, the entire Rosicrucian clique was dismissed from the court. Bischoffswerder retired early from the army at the age of fifty-six and retreated to the Polish country estate given to him by Frederick-William II. There he lived quietly until his death. Wöllner fared rather worse. Dismissed ungraciously and without pension, he retired to the estate of Gross Rietz, bought with his wife's money in 1790, where he lived for his remaining years, eking out a living as a landlord, embittered and depressed, but respected by his neighbors. The Edict Concerning Religion was never formally abolished, but was allowed to fall into disuse. The political power of the Gold- un Rosenkreuz was at an end, and a strange episode in German history was over.

In the south, the order was also in decline. After the ban on alchemy in Austria-Hungary in 1785, the order went dormant. Then, in 1790, it surfaced again for a period under the new emperor, Leopold II, who was himself interested in alchemy. But Leopold died in 1792 after a very short reign and, under his successor, Franz II, another ban was issued. The order must have continued underground for a time, however, because an alchemical/Rosicrucian manuscript, *Aleph*, by Archarion, can be found in the Austrian National Library bearing the date 1802.

Although the Gold- und Rosenkreuz was relatively short-lived, it had a significant impact on its age, and some of its circles were lively centers of intellectual life. One example was the circle at Rajec, near Brno, in Moravia (now located in the Czech Republic), home of Count (later Prince) Karl Josef von Salm-Reifferscheidt. The Count was a remarkable figure, a sort of Renaissance man of learning, whose interests encompassed the worlds of the French *philosophes*, modern science, alchemy, and spiritualism. His Rosicrucian circle included philosophers, chemists, and metallurgists. The work of this circle played a significant role in establishing an organized scientific community in Moravia.[4]

Before leaving the subject of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, it is worth mentioning that its influence was also felt in eastern Europe. There was, for example, a circle in Warsaw, founded in the 1770s and headed by Count Karl Adolf von Brühl. Another member was

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[4] Jiri Kroupa, *Alchymie Stesti* (Brno: Muzeum Kromerizska/Muzejni a Vlastivedna Společnost, 1987), and letter received by the author from Dr. Kroupa.

Samuel Okraszewski, the first Pole to follow the example of the Montgolfier brothers in experimenting with air balloons.[5] The King of Poland, Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, was a Freemason and is also reported to have been a Rosicrucian, although it is difficult to determine to which variety of Rosicrucianism he belonged.[6] At the time, there was a second Masonic system in Poland with Rosicrucian elements, known as the Bon Pasteur, and it may have been this system into which the king was initiated.

The Russian branch of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, based in Moscow, had some remarkable members, notably the writer and publisher Nikolai Novikov. He and another Rosicrucian, I. V. Lopuchin, ran a publishing house called the Typographical Society, which made available to the Russian public for the first time a Russian version of the works of foreign mystical writers such as Jakob Boehme, Angelus Silesius, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, the French Quietist writer Madame Guyon, and the English mystic John Pordage. Novikov and his fellow Rosicrucians also ran various charitable institutions in Moscow, including a hospital and an apothecary's shop for the poor. Unfortunately, Novikov fell foul of the Empress Catherine the Great, who was opposed to Freemasonry. Catherine had him thrown into prison, but he was released four years later when she died and her son came to the throne.[7]

After that, no more appears to have been heard of the order in Russia. But elsewhere, the Rosicrucian movement was entering a new phase.

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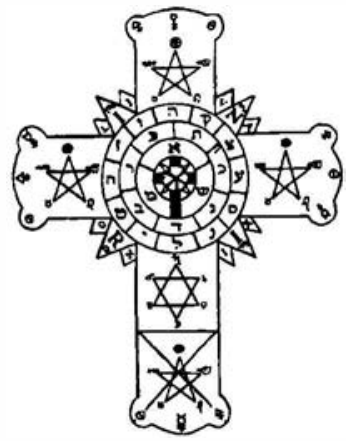
[5] Ludwik Hass, *Sekta farmazonii warszwskiej* (Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), p. 157.

[6] Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-August Poniatowski et l'Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1952); see also Ludwik Hass, *Sekta farmazionii warszwskiej*.

[7] For bibliographical references and a more detailed account of the Moscow Rosicrucians, see Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 153–159.



Chapter 9

The Revival in France

The farther in time you travel from the era of the manifestos, the more bizarre and exotic the revivals of Rosicrucianism become; the more they are overlaid with other traditions and symbologies. One of the most vigorous of these revivals took place in France. Its origins can be traced back to the late 18th century, when Rosicrucian degrees began to be introduced into French Masonry. In a footnote in chapter 15 of *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, A. E. Waite writes:

> The alchemical correspondences of Rose-Croix Masonry are developed especially in L'Eminent Ordre des Chevaliers de l'Aigle Noir, a Sovereign Chapter of which is claimed to have been established at The Orient of Marseilles in 1761. It was a Rite of two Degrees, the first of which offers a very curious blend of Kabalistic and Hermetic symbolism, while the second is a code of the Eighteenth Degree, having marked developments to connect its emblematic period with the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a Discourse attached to the First Degree we hear of Raymond Lully, described as a great philosopher who accomplished the heavenly marriage of the Spouse with the Six Virgins, from which union was begotten the Messias by him expected, a perfect gold of transmutation. He presented this treasure to the King of England, who made coins thereof, bearing a Cross on one side and on the other a Rose.[1]

[1] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider, 1924), chapter 15, p. 428.

Other fringe Masonic rites, such as those of Memphis and Mizraim, also had their Rosicrucian grades. Rosicrucian Masonry is now widely practiced as the so-called "Eighteenth Degree," which in Britain is one of the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite (see Appendix).

In a previous book[2] I discuss the reasons for the resurgence of occult and magical ideas in the superficially rational climate of 18th-century France. This was the era that bred the Comte de Saint Germain and Martines de Pasqually, with his Order of the Elect Cohens which practiced a highly individual type of ritual magic. Into this milieu, Rosicrucian ideas appear to have infiltrated from Germany. There are signs that various French Rosicrucian groups were at work at least as early as the 1790s—I am now talking about specifically Rosicrucian organizations, as opposed to the Masonic Rosicrucian degrees.

One piece of evidence for this (though admittedly it must be taken with caution) is a document recording the admission of an Englishman, Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom, to the Society of the Rosy Cross by the Comte de Chazal on the island of Mauritius on 12 September 1794.[3] There are references in the document to various women having been initiated into the order, including Semiramis, Queen of Egypt, Miriam the prophetess, Peronella, wife of Nicolas Flamel, and Leona Constantia, Abbess of Clermont, who was received in 1736. Waite, who is inclined to think that some fact lies behind the date 1736, concludes that the document "connotes a pre-Ritual period of the Order, such as may have corresponded to the procedure of 1710, or even earlier. There are traces also in general alchemical history of the Secret Art being perpetuated in this manner from Master to chosen pupil. The *Societas Rosae Crucis* was obviously securing its transmission from age to age. . . . My conclusion is that the Comte de Chazal belonged to a branch of the Order which is not to be identified with the Golden and Rosy Cross, as the latter existed in 1777; its root may perhaps be referable to the system of which Sigmund Richter became the spokesman in his work on the Philosophical Stone, or to some earlier development."[4] The document is shown on pages 87–91.

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[2] Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (London: Rider, 1972; New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974).

[3] The document was transcribed by the English occultist Frederick Hockley, and a copy is now in the hands of Mr. R. A. Gilbert, who has published a small facsimile edition.

[4] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, pp. 554—555. Some curious word usage in the text suggests that it was badly translated from the French.

Copy of the Admission of Dr Bacstrom into the Society of the Rosa Croix by Le Comte de Chazal at the Island of Mauritius, with the Seal of the Society.

ISLE OF MAURITIUS, DISTRICT OF PAMPELAVUSO,
12*th Sept.* 1794.

In the name of יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים the True and only God Manifested in Trinity.

I, Sigismund Bacstrom, do hereby promise, in the most sincere and solemn manner, faithfully to observe the following articles, during the whole course of my natural life, to the best of my knowledge and ability; which articles I hereby confirm by oath and by my proper signature hereunto annexed.

One of the worthy members of the august, most ancient, and most learned Society, the Investigators of Divine, Spiritual, and Natural Truth (which society more than two centuries and a half ago (*i.e.*, in 1490) did separate themselves from the Free-Masons, but were again united in one spirit among themselves under the denomination of *Fratres Rosæ Crucis,* Brethren of the Rosy Cross, *i.e.* the Brethren who believe in the Grand Atonement made by Jesus Christ on the Rosy Cross, stained and marked with His blood, for the redemption of Spiritual Natures), having thought me worthy to be admitted into their august society, in quality of a Member Apprentice and Brother, and to partake of their sublime knowledge, I do hereby engage in the most solemn manner—

1. That I will always, to the utmost of my power, conduct myself as becomes a worthy member, with sobriety and piety, and to endeavour to prove myself grateful to the Society for so distinguished a favour as I now receive, during the whole course of my natural life.

2. That derision, insult, and persecution of this august society may be guarded against, I will never openly publish that I am a member, nor reveal the name or person of such members as I know at present or may know hereafter.

3. I solemnly promise that I will never during my whole life publicly reveal the secret knowledge I receive at present, or may receive at a future period from the Society, or from one of its members, nor even privately, but will keep our Secrets sacred.

4. I do hereby promise that I will instruct for the benefit of good men, before I depart this life, one person, or two persons at most, in our secret knowledge, and initiate and receive such person (or persons) as a member or apprentice into our Society, in the same manner as I have been initiated and received; but such person only as I believe to be truly worthy and of an upright, well-meaning mind, blameless conduct, sober life, and desirous of knowledge. And as there is no distinction of sexes in the Spiritual World, neither among the Blessed Angels, nor among the rational immortal Spirits of the human race; and as we have had a Semiramis, Queen of Egypt; a Myriam, the prophetess; a Peronella, the wife of Flammel; and, lastly, a Leona Constantia, Abbess of Clermont, who was actually received as a practical member and master into our Society in the year 1736; which women are believed to have been all possessors of the Great Work, consequently *Sorores Rosæ Crucis*, and members of our Society by possession, as the possession of this our Art is the key to the most hidden knowledge; and, moreover, as redemption was manifested to mankind by means of a woman (the Blessed Virgin), and as Salvation, which is of infinitely more value than our whole Art, is granted to the female sex as well as to the male, our Society does not exclude a worthy woman from being initiated, God himself not having excluded women from partaking of every felicity in the next life. We will not hesitate to receive a worthy woman into our Society as a member apprentice (and even as a practical member, or master, if she does possess our work practically, and has herself accomplished it), provided she is found, like Peronella, Flammel's wife, to be sober, pious, discreet, prudent, and reserved, of an upright and blameless conduct, and desirous of knowledge.

5. I do hereby declare that I intend, with the permission of God, to commence our great work with mine own hands as soon as circumstances, health, opportunity, and time will permit; 1st, that I may do good therewith as a faithful steward; 2nd, that I may merit the continued confidence which the Society has placed in me in quality of a member apprentice.

6. I do further most solemnly promise that (should I accomplish the Great Work) I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me by appearing great and exalted, or seeking to appear in a public character in the world by hunting after vain titles of nobility and vain glory, which are all fleeting and vain, but will endeavour to live a sober and orderly life, as becomes every Christian, though not possessed of so great a temporal blessing; I will devote a considerable part of my abundance and superfluity (multipliable infinitely to work of private charity), to aged and deeply-afflicted people, to poor children, and, above all, to such as love God and act uprightly, and I will avoid encouraging laziness and the profession of public beggars.

7. I will communicate every new or useful discovery relating to our work to the nearest member of our Society, and hide nothing from him, seeing he cannot, as a worthy member, possibly abuse it, or prejudice me thereby; on the other hand, I will hide these secret discoveries from the world.

8. I do, moreover, solemnly promise (should I become a master and possessor) that I will not, on the one hand, assist, aid, or support with gold or with silver any government, King, or Sovereign, whatever, except by paying taxes, nor, on the other hand, any populace, or particular set of men, to enable them to revolt against the government; I will leave public affairs and arrangements to the government of God, who will bring about the events foretold in the revelation of St John, which are fast accomplishing; I will not interfere with affairs of government.

9. I will neither build churches, chapels, nor hospitals, and such public charities, as there is already a sufficient

number of such public buildings and institutions, if they were only properly applied and regulated. I will not give any salary to a priest or churchman as such, to make him more proud and insolent than he is already. If I relieve a distressed worthy clergyman, I will consider him in the light of a private distressed individual only. I will give no charity with the view of making my name known to the world, but will give my alms privately and secretly.

10. I hereby promise that I will never be ungrateful to the worthy friend and brother who initiated and received me, but will respect and oblige him as far as lies in my power, in the same manner as he has been obliged to promise to his friend who received him.

11. Should I travel either by sea or by land, and meet with any person who may call himself a Brother of the Rosy Cross, I will examine him whether he can give me a proper explanation of The Universal Fire of Nature, and of our magnet for attracting and magnifying the same under the form of a salt, whether he is well acquainted with our work, and whether he knows the universal dissolvent and its use. If I find him able to give satisfactory answers, I will acknowledge him as a member and brother of our Society. Should I find him superior in knowledge and experience to myself, I will honour and respect him as a master above me.

12. If it should please God to permit me to accomplish our Great Work with my own hands, I will give praise and thanks to God in humble prayer, and devote my time to the doing and promoting all the good that lies in my power, and to the pursuit of true and useful knowledge.

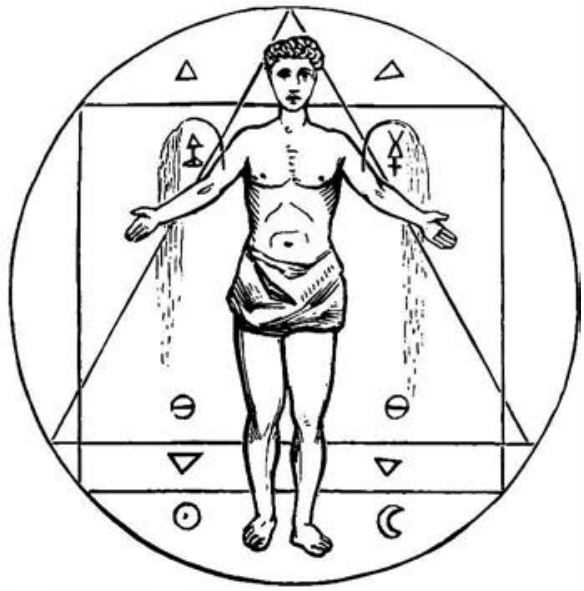
13. I do hereby solemnly promise that I will not encourage wickedness and debauchery, thereby offending God by administering the medicine for the human body, or the *aurum potabile,* to a patient, or patients, infected with the venereal disease.

14. I do promise that I will never give the Fermented Metallic Medecine for transmutation to any person living, no, not a single grain, unless the person is an initiated and

received member and Brother of the Rosy Cross.

To keep faithfully the above articles as I now receive them from a worthy member of our Society, as he received them himself, I willingly agree, and sign this with my name, and affix my seal to the same. So help me God. Amen. S. BACSTROM, L.S.

I have initiated and received Mr Sigismund Bacstrom, Doctor of Physic, as a practical member and brother above an apprentice in consequence of his solid learning, which I certify by my name and seal.— Mauritius, 12 Sept. 1794. DU CHAZEL, F.R.C.



The Philosophic Seal of the Society of the Rosicrucians.

Reproduction from A. E. Waite,
The Real History of the Rosicrucians
(London: George Redway, 1887). pp. 409–414.

This Society of the Rosy Cross, into which Dr. Bacstrom was initiated, was clearly, like the Gold- und Rosenkreuz, alchemical in emphasis. About Bacstrom's initiator, the Comte de Chazal, a certain amount is known from Bacstrom's manuscript, *Anecdotes of the Comte de Chazal, F.·.R.·.C.·.*, which Waite summarizes in his *Brotherhood*. I quote part of his summary:

> (1) The acquaintance with de Chazal began in Mauritius. (2) He is described as the most learned as well as the most opulent man in the island. . . . (3) He is said to have educated a hundred orphan girls and to have provided them with marriage dowries totalling another million piastres. (4) His more private charities were also very numerous. (5) As to the source of his revenues, he received annually considerable sums from Bordeaux. (6) Dr. Bacstrom affirms that he had inspected a manuscript in the Count's autograph, containing an account of his experiments and cures by means of animal magnetism, electricity and galvanism. (7) Though resident at the time in Mauritius he was cognisant of all that took place in Paris during the horrors of the French Revolution, including the execution of the French King and Queen, while all communication was suspended between France, Mauritius and the adjacent island of Bourbon.[5]

Thus Chazal had the reputation of a Rosicrucian adept in the tradition of Saint Germain. Inevitably, he was credited with the knowledge of transmutation, and Bacstrom further relates how he was taken to Chazal's laboratory where he witnessed the Count produce: "*(a)* gold of thirty carats, but exceedingly brittle; *(b)* most glorious, soft and ductile gold of twenty-four carats; *(c)* a gold of yet more glorious colour, somewhat heavier than the former."[6]

Apart from Bacstrom's manuscripts, there is little written evidence of French Rosicrucian activity at this period, except for Rose-Croix Masonry which was really a separate phenomenon. One other piece of evidence, however, is a manuscript which was found among the papers of Eliphas Lévi's disciple, Mary Gebhard, titled *La Clef de Sapience des Frères de la Rose Croix*. It is undated, but a caption to one drawing reads: "Qabalistic and Hermetic picture found in the possession of a Jew in 1772 by Alliette." This Alliette, better known under his pseudonym of Etteilla, was a cartomancer who formed a society of tarot enthusiasts that carried on after his death in 1791. The document mentioned may have emanated from

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[5] Sigismund Bacstrom, "Anecdotes of the Comte de Chazal, F.·. R.·.C.·.," in A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, pp. 556–557.

[6] Bacstrom, in A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, p. 557.

this group or from Etteilla himself. It takes the form of a series of alchemical formulae, very much in the tradition of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz texts.

Until the latter part of the 19th century, Rosicrucianism in France remained a rather elusive affair, but in the occult heyday that followed Eliphas Lévi, it came into the public eye thanks to the activities of two curious characters, the Marquis Stanislas de Guaita and Joséphin Péladan, who together in 1888 founded *l'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix*, the Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross.

De Guaita was descended from a Lombard family. His great-great-grandfather had married the daughter of a French baron and thus inherited an estate at Alteville, in Lorraine, where Stanislas was born in 1861. After a Jesuit schooling at Dijon and Nancy, Stanislas went to Paris accompanied by his old school friend, Maurice Barrès, who was later to become a distinguished writer and politician. De Guaita had by that time developed a passion for poetry. Though he intended to take a law degree, he soon became immersed in the writing of verse and, in 1881, published his collection *Oiseaux de Passage*, which was followed by two other works, *La Muse Noire* and *Rosa Mystica*. It was his friend, the writer Catulle Mendès, who introduced him to occultism by advising him to read Eliphas Lévi. The experience was a revelation. From that moment, de Guaita wrote to a friend, "I devoted myself entirely to occultism, and I set about researching and reading everything that had been written on the occult sciences. Shortly afterwards I made the acquaintance of Péladan, then of Barlet and Papus."[7]

Péladan (1858–1918) was a character who personified everything eccentric and *fin de siècle*. His father was a schoolteacher and editor of a fervently Catholic and monarchist journal, whose religious fanaticism was so extreme that he attempted to start a cult based on a hypothetical sixth wound of Christ. From his father, Joséphin inherited his extreme Catholicism, and from his elder brother, Adrien, he derived his interest in mysticism. Adrien was a homeopathic doctor, Qabalist, and Orientalist who had been initiated into a Rosicrucian group at Toulouse in 1858.[8]

After a career as a bank clerk, Péladan set himself up as an occult propagandist and called himself Sar Mérodack Péladan. Sar is the Assyrian word for king and Mérodack (or Marduck), the Chaldean god associated with Jupiter. The name was also chosen for its similarity to Merodachbaladan, the King of Babylon mentioned in Isaiah: 39, 1. The Sar was a striking-looking man with a thick, black beard, a great mop of curly hair, and large, dark, slightly protruding eyes staring from beneath bushy brows. He cut a col-

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[7] Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita: Souvenirs de son Secrétaire* (Paris, Editions du Symbolisme, 1935). Translation mine.

[8] James Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: MacDonald, 1971), p. 259.

orful figure in the cafés of Monmartre, where he paraded in a variety of costumes. Sometimes he wore a monk's robe, sometimes a doublet with velvet breeches fringed with lace.

But Péladan was not the shallow poseur you might suppose. Behind the posturing exterior lay a highly original and creative mind, a mind of great versatility. He was, among other things, the author of a series of remarkable novels, *La Décadence Latine*, some having occult themes, others being more or less conventional romances. He was, in his way, an important literary figure in France and in other countries, though for some reason he never achieved a following in Britain. In fact, the British Library catalogue does not even list his name. In Germany, his works were published in translation, and one of them carried a foreword by the Swedish dramatist Strindberg, who also had occult leanings.

The book that brought Péladan and de Guaita together was *Le Vice Suprême*, the first volume of Péladan's *La Décadence Latine*. After reading it, de Guaita wrote to the author: "It is your *Vice Suprême* that revealed to me (me, a sceptic, though respectful of all holy things) that the Qabalah and High Magic can be more than just a mystification."[9]

The result was a meeting and a long correspondence between the two which shows them beginning as master and pupil and later developing a close friendship in which they addressed each other as Mérodack and Nébo, the latter being the name for the Chaldean god associated with Mercury. In due course, de Guaita began to publish occult works of his own and, in 1888, he launched the Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross. This was headed by a supreme council of twelve, six of whom were known and six unknown. It is probable that the unknown six never existed, but by now it was *de rigueur* for a Rosicrucian order to have a few secret chiefs. The *unbekannten Oberen* had passed into Rosicrucian mythology.

The main participants in the order were de Guaita (the supreme chief), Péladan, Papus (a.k.a. Dr. Gérard Encuasse), Marc Haven (a.k.a. Dr. Emmanuel Lalande), the Abbé Alta (a.k.a. the Abbé Melinge), the writer Paul Adam, and François-Charles Barlet (a.k.a. Alfred Faucheux, civil servant, astrologer, and alchemical enthusiast).

Members of the order passed through three ascending grades of initiation: baccalaureate, licenciate, and doctorate of the Qabalah. Each of these required the passing of examinations. The purpose of the order was threefold: to study the classics of occultism; to enter into spiritual communion with the Divine through meditation; and to spread the word among the uninitiated.

The syllabus for the first examination involved the study of the general history of the Western tradition, with particular emphasis

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[9] This, and other letters from de Guaita to Péladan, are quoted from *Lettres Inédites de Stanislas de Guaita au Sar Joséphin Péladan*, introduced by Dr. E. Berthelet (1952).

on the Rosy Cross, and the formation of the Hebrew letters, their names and their symbolism. The second consisted of the general history of religious tradition through the ages, with special reference to the unity of dogma behind all symbologies, and knowledge of the constitution of Hebrew words. This part of the examination was oral and had to be accompanied by a written paper dealing with a philosophical, moral, or mystical question.[10]

Péladan's fervent Catholicism soon brought him into conflict with the other members of the Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross. In 1890, he broke away to form a group of his own, *l'Ordre de la Rose Croix Catholique, du Temple et du Graal*, announcing the move in a letter to Papus which was published in the latter's journal, *l'Initiation*. By this means, Péladan hoped to bring occultism back under the wing of the Church. The aim of the Catholic Rose Cross was to carry out works of mercy with a view to preparing for the reign of the Holy Spirit.

The membership of Péladan's order was also divided into three ascending grades: equerries, knights, and commanders. The commanders were assigned to the different sephiroth of the Tree of Life. Gary de Lacroze, for example, was Commander of Tiphereth, while Comte Léonce de Laramandie was Commander of Geburah. The order's meetings took place in Péladan's flat in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Chaps, where he officiated dressed in a monk's robe with a rose cross on the chest.

De Guaita became alarmed at the activities of the rival order and sent a pained letter to Péladan. "I regret," he wrote, "that the provocations, more or less indirect, of your R+C+C force us to protest energetically against it. It is important to make known to the students of occultism that its doctrines are the very opposite of all the Rosicrucian traditions, and that we can have nothing to do with the acts of willful madness which you have been perpetrating in increasing numbers for a year under the label of the Rosy Cross."[11]

Péladan evidently replied suggesting a meeting to smooth out their differences and accusing de Guaita of being unnecessarily aggressive. De Guaita in turn wrote back that "a conversation would not smooth out anything" and signed his letter: "Yours, and *bon voyage*, Guaita." A reconciliation was now clearly impossible, and, in due course, de Guaita issued a formal denunciation of Péladan, declaring him a "schismatic and apostate Rosicrucian."[12]

By then, however, Péladan's order was enjoying considerable success. The Catholic Rose Cross was, in fact, much more than an occult order. Péladan envisaged it as a nucleus from which would emerge a whole set of religious, moral, and aesthetic values. He as-

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[10] Pierre Montloin and Jean-Pierre Bayard, *Les Rose-Croix* (Paris, 1971).

[11] Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita, souvenirs de son Secrétaire* (Paris: Edition du Symbolisme, 1935).

[12] Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita, souvenirs de son Secrétaire.*

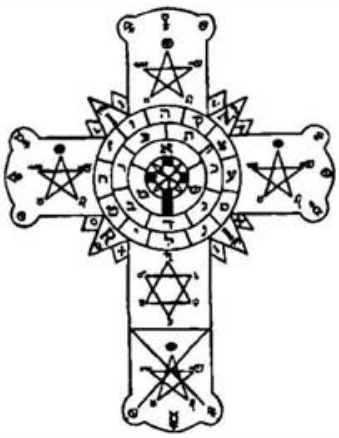
sumed the role of standard-bearer in the field of art, music, and drama, and carried it off with considerable effectiveness.

Péladan believed that the artist should be a knight in armor, engaged in a kind of grail quest, a crusader waging perpetual war on the bourgeoisie. To further this ideal, he instituted a series of exhibitions, the Salons de la Rose-Croix, the first of which took place in 1892 and was a great success. Their purpose, Péladan declared, was to restore the cult of the ideal, with the accent on beauty and tradition. Nothing experimental or modernist was permitted, nor were conventional naturalistic subjects allowed. The canvasses preferred were those that dealt with Catholic, mystical, or spiritual themes. The salons ran for five years and attracted some well-known names in the world of art, including Gustave Moreau, Félicien Rops, and Georges Rouault.

Péladan was also active in the world of drama as an impressario, playwright, and director. Among the plays performed by his Théatre de la Rose-Croix were two "missing" plays by Aeschylus which he claimed to have discovered: *Prometheus, Bearer of Fire* and *Prometheus Delivered*. These supposedly formed a trilogy with *Prometheus Enchained*. He also performed plays with more mystical and exotic titles, such as *Le Mystère du Graal, Le Mystère des Rose-Croix* and *Babylone*, "a Wagnerian tragedy in four acts."

In the field of music, Péladan had considerable influence. He was a fanatical Wagnerite, and his advocacy of the German composer probably had a great deal to do with Wagner's popularity in France. Having formed a Rosicrucian school of art and a Rosicrucian theater, it was natural for Péladan to start a Rosicrucian orchestra. Its semi-official composer was Erik Satie, who later became a well-known name in the musical world. He composed music for Péladan's plays and rituals. After a year with Péladan, however, Satie broke away in 1892 to form his own group, the Metropolitan Church of Art of Jesus the Conductor.

Péladan's order did not vanish with his death in 1918, but was continued in a modified form by his Belgian disciple Emile Dantinne, alias Sar Hiéronymous. The Qabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross survived de Guaita's death in 1897 and had wide ramifications in the 20th century. It appears to have been taken over by Joanny Bricaud, known for a number of scholarly books on the history of occultism, and then, in 1932, by Constant Martin Chevillon, who was shot as a hostage by the Gestapo in 1944. A number of Rosicrucian groups in the United States claim to derive their authority from various branches of the French Rosicrucian movement.



Chapter 10

The Golden Dawn, Its Antecedents and Offshoots

The most impressive fruit to grow from the Rosicrucian tree was undoubtedly the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical society which appeared in England in the 1880s and whose offshoots are still active today. The Golden Dawn, as Gerald Yorke has written, "with its Inner Order of the Rose of Ruby and Cross of Gold (R.R. et A.C.) was the crowning glory of the occult revival in the nineteenth century. It synthesized into a coherent whole a vast body of disconnected and widely scattered material and welded it into a practical and effective system, which cannot be said of any other occult Order of which we know at that time or since."[1]

Lately, a great deal has been written about the Golden Dawn, and it is not my intention to give a full résumé of its history and teachings. However, it is relevant here to examine the development of the specifically Rosicrucian elements in the Golden Dawn and to consider the particular form they took in the rituals of the Inner Order.

In the Golden Dawn, a number of occult threads came together, one of them being the thread of Masonic Rosicrucianism. It is not known for certain how early Rosicrucian grades began to be worked in Masonry. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, a Rose-Croix grade was being operated in France as early as 1754, and a similar grade, the Rose-Croix of Heredom, was introduced into British Masonry as the Eighteenth Degree of the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite (see Appendix).

By the 1860s, interest in Rosicrucian matters had grown sufficiently in this country to warrant the formation of a Masonic group

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[1] Gerald Yorke, in the foreword to *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* by Ellic Howe (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972; York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1978), p. ix. In fact, a similar claim could be made for the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

devoted to their study. This was the Rosicrucian Society in England, later latinized to the *Societas Rosicruiana in Anglia* (usually called the *Soc. Ros.* or SRIA). According to Ellic Howe's account in *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, the *Soc. Ros.* was founded in 1867 by Robert Wentworth Little (1840–1878), a clerical employee at Freemasons' Hall in London. Little adapted the system of grades used by the German Gold- und Rosenkreuz order, possibly with the help of another occultist, Kenneth Mackenzie (1833–1886), who knew German and claimed to have received initiation from the German Rosicrucian adepts. This account must now be questioned in the light of a letter I received from a reader following publication of the first edition of this book. According to him, the order originally founded by Little in 1865 was a different organization called the Red Cross of Constantine. His letter continued:

> However, in setting this up Little also heard of a Rosicrucian Society in operation in Edinburgh. This was not masonic but was under the leadership of a Scottish mason, Anthony O'Neal Haye, also the editor of the *Scottish Freemason.* Little and Wm James Hughan were admitted to this on 31st December 1866 and in subsequent months they were admitted through all the degrees, the grades as they are worked today. The first meeting in London of this reconstituted Rosicrucian Society in Anglia was on 1st June 1867 . . . Little's SRIA was now, of course, under a masonic qualification, and the Scottish ritual, being considered too high church, a lot of it in Latin, was cut down to size, although today there are still Latin prayers. Little compared it with the German rituals, a copy of which he had borrowed from Mackenzie in 1868 . . . but these were completely different and of no assistance. Little later also wrote addresses for each grade, also with the help of Mackenzie . . . but these are the only ways in which Mackenzie can be said to have shared in the reconstitution. The 'Scottish Branch' eventually died out giving the opportunity to start the *Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia* under the masonic qualification.[2]

Mackenzie joined the *Soc. Ros.* in 1872, but resigned in 1875 after a disagreement with Little. On 24 March 1881, in a letter to his fellow occultist Dr. William Wynn Westcott, he wrote disparagingly of Little's order and claimed that he himself possessed the real Rosicrucian degrees. He went on:

> It has taken me a quarter of a century to obtain them and the whole of the degrees are different to anything known

[2] Name withheld for confidentiality. Reproduced by permission.

> to the Rosi. Society of England—those few who have these degrees dare not communicate them. Read [Hargrave] Jennings again and [Bulwer-Lytton's] *Zanoni*. Even Lytton who knew so much was only a neophyte and could not reply when I tested him years ago. How then could Little maintain that he had them? I know how many real Rosicrucians there are in these islands.[3]

Lord Lytton's involvement (or rather non-involvement) with the *Soc. Ros.* is a curious story. Probably on account of his "Rosicrucian" novel, *Zanoni*, he was proposed and voted in as Honorary Grand Patron of the society in 1871, but without his knowledge. When he found out what had happened, he wrote to John Yarker, another enthusiastic dabbler in fringe Masonry and a member of the *Soc. Ros.*'s Manchester college. Yarker sent an apologetic reply. As far as is known Lytton never even attended a meeting of the *Soc. Ros.*

It is important to mention some other leading members of the *Soc. Ros.* One of them was Dr. William Wynn Westcott (1848–1925), a coroner for northeast London, who joined the society in 1880 and became its Supreme Magus in 1891 after the death of the previous office-holder, Dr. W. R. Woodman, who in turn had taken over after Little's death in 1878. Westcott was a quiet, scholarly man who, before becoming coroner, had spent two years in retirement at Hendon studying Qabalah, Hermeticism, and Rosicrucianism. A more colorful member of the society was Samuel Liddell Mathers, alias MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918), whose love of things Celtic caused him to claim Jacobite ancestry and the title of Comte de Glenstrae. Little is known about his real background except that he was born in Hackney, the son of a commercial clerk, and educated at Bedford Grammar School. Apart from his occult interests, he also saw himself as a military expert. He claimed the rank of lieutenant in the Hampshire Infantry Volunteers and wrote a book called *Practical Instruction in Infantry Campaigning Exercise*, which he in fact translated from a French manual. He is better known for his *Kabbalah Unveiled*, a translation of Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata*.

It was Westcott and Mathers who were the chief architects of a new society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which came into being in 1888 and was supposedly based on the authority granted in correspondence by a German adept called Fräulein Anna Sprengel. Ellic Howe has convincingly shown, in his *Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, that the correspondence was a forgery and that Fräulein Sprengel probably never existed. This, however, does not invalidate the Golden Dawn itself, whose rituals were almost entirely Mathers' own creation.

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[3] Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn*, chapter 2, pp. 30–31.

In assessing an order like the Golden Dawn, it is helpful to bear in mind the basic principles on which an occult society works. In any occult system, there is a set of ideals or aims represented by a symbology. The process of mastering the symbology is marked out in a series of grades, each of which has its own rituals. The path of occult initiation is beset with dangers. To begin with, it depends to a great extent on the use of the imagination and, without a strict system of control, the stimulation of the imaginative faculty can cause mental imbalance. A second danger arises from the necessity for a system of hierarchy, for there can be no initiation without a superior authority to confer it. This opens up the possibility of disputes over who carries the authority, and these can become particularly acute when the ultimate authority rests in secret chiefs, *Unbekannten Oberen* or *Superieurs Inconnus*. Obviously, anyone can claim to have his own contacts with the secret chiefs. Another difficulty arises over the choice of symbolism, for it is not easy to find a set of symbols which really strike a deep chord in the human psyche. All too often, attempts at synthesis in symbolism result in a confused and ineffective amalgam of different systems.

The Golden Dawn was one of the very few magical orders which succeeded, for a time, in overcoming these obstacles, particularly the last one. Mathers and Westcott, in concocting the Golden Dawn rituals, drew on many sources and managed to blend them so effectively that the ceremonial system they created has remained alive to this day. The ingredients that went into Mathers' recipe included Qabalah, alchemy, tarot, astrology, and many other traditions, including the Rosicrucian legend.

Golden Dawn members were led through a series of grades corresponding to the Gold- und Rosenkreuz system. These extended from Neophyte, through Philosophus, and theoretically right up to Adeptus Exemptus, with the three highest grades belonging to the secret chiefs. In practice, the grade of Theoricus Adeptus Minor was the highest that any member ever reached.

The first four grades, excluding Neophyte, which was really a threshold grade, constituted the "outer" order of the Golden Dawn. These were Zelator, Theoricus, Practicus, and Philosophus. When candidates reached the grade of Philosophus, they were ready to apply for admission to the "inner" order, known as the *Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis*, the order of the Rose of Ruby and the Cross of Gold (R. R. et A. C., for short). Here Mathers, with his genius for inventing ritual, went to work with the Christian Rosenkreuz legend and created a highly impressive and dramatic series of ceremonies designed to imbue participants with the Rosicrucian ideals of service, self-sacrifice, and piety.

After passing through the transitional grade of Lord of the Paths in the Portal of the Vault of the Adepts and waiting for a period of nine months, candidates were ready to enter the first grade of

the inner order. The ceremony was conducted by three officers: a chief adept and two assistants, and was carried out in three stages. The form of the ritual was designed to re-enact the discovery of the tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz. Within the temple where the initiation took place was an elaborately designed vault representing Brother Rosenkreuz's burial place. The walls were covered with Qabalistic, alchemical, and astrological symbols, painted in colors that followed occult correspondences. The walls, seven in number to represent the planets, were, in turn, painted in appropriate colors. On the white ceiling was a rose with twenty-two petals (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, of the paths in the Tree of Life and of the tarot trumps). The rose and cross theme was frequently repeated in the decoration. On the floor, for instance, was a golden cross united to a red rose of forty-nine petals; on the altar was a black cross with a rose of twenty-five petals.

In the first stage of the ceremony, aspirants, after demanding admittance to the order, are refused and given a lecture on the virtues of humility. This is then reinforced by their being led to a large wooden cross to which they are secured, their hands through running nooses, and cords binding their waist and feet. In this position the candidates take an oath, swearing, among other things, to lead a pure and unselfish life, to keep secret all things connected with the order, to uphold the authority of its chiefs, and, from that day forward, to apply themselves to the Great Work, "which is, to purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human, and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my higher and Divine Genius, and that in this event I will not abuse the great power entrusted to me."[4]

Candidates are then released from the cross and given an account of the life and works of Christian Rosenkreuz, based on the *Fama*. The third adept says: "You will now quit the Portal for a short time, and on your return the Ceremony of Opening the Tomb will be proceeded with." Aspirants are then handed a wand and crux ansata (that is, an ankh or Egyptian cross of life) which they are told will ensure their re-admission.

On returning, aspirants find that the chief adept is no longer there. They stand before the vault while the second adept explains the significance of the symbols on the door of the vault. These include the familiar faces of the cherubim of Ezekiel, the Bull, Lion, Eagle, and Man. The third adept speaks:

> Upon more closely examining the Door of the Tomb, you will perceive, even as Frater N.N., and those with him did

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[4] This and the subsequent quotations from the Golden Dawn rituals are taken from Israel Regardie's *The Golden Dawn*, Vol. 2 (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1970, third edition), pp. 214, 220, 223, 227.

> perceive, that beneath the CXX in the inscription were placed the characters IX thus:
>
> POST CXX ANNOS PATEBO
> IX
>
> being equivalent to Post Annos Lux Crucis Patebo—at the end of 120 years, I, the Light of the Cross, will disclose myself. For the letters forming LVX are made from the dismembered and conjoined angles of the Cross; and 120 is the product of the numbers from 1 to 5, multiplied in regular progression, which number five is symbolised in the Cross with four extremities and one centre point.

The second adept continues:

> On the following morning, Frater N.N. and his companions forced open the door *(he opens it wide)* and there appeared to their sight a Tomb of Seven Sides and Seven Corners. Every side was five feet broad, and eight feet high, even as the same is faithfully represented before you.

The second adept then enters and passes by north to the east of the vault and turns to face west. The third adept places the aspirant on the north side facing south, and takes a place at south facing north. The second adept then goes on to describe the significance of the various characteristics of the vault, including the ubiquitous Bull, Lion, Eagle, and Man. After the aspirant has taken various further vows, the high point of the ceremony arrives. The second and third adepts move away the altar from its position above the pastos. They lift the lid of the pastos, revealing the chief adept lying inside.

After the aspirant and the two other adepts have paid their respects, the chief adept, from his recumbent position, with eyes closed, says:

> Buried with that light in a mystical death, rising again in a mystical resurrection, cleansed and purified through Him our Master, O Brother of the Cross and the Rose. Like Him, O Adepts of all ages, have ye toiled. Like Him have ye suffered tribulation. Poverty, torture and death have ye passed through. They have been but the purification of the Gold.
>
> In the alembic of thine heart, through the athanor of affliction, seek thou the true stone of the Wise.

The chief adept then presents the aspirant with a crook and a scourge, signifying Mercy and Severity (two of the spheres on the

Qabalistic Tree of Life). After the aspirant has been given further revelations about Christian Rosenkreuz, the pastos is closed and the altar replaced. The aspirant is led out of the temple for the second time.

On returning for the third and final part of the ceremony, the aspirant finds that the chief adept has emerged and that the room has once again been re-arranged. The aspirant is then given a long series of revelations on the significance of the letters INRI, and the colors corresponding to the planets and signs of the zodiac. The color symbolism of the vault is also explained in greater detail. Finally the vault is arranged as at the beginning, and the ceremony is closed. The aspirant emerges as an initiated Adeptus Minor.

I have paraphrased this long and complicated ceremony in order to show how elements of the original Rosicrucian legend—the life of Christian Rosenkreuz, the discovery of the vault, and the rose-cross symbol itself—were skillfully woven together with other imagery taken from Qabalah, tarot, astrology, and alchemy, and couched in resonant language to produce a powerful ritual. It is also interesting how the motifs from the vision of Ezekiel, the Bull, Lion, Eagle, and Man, which were veiled in the original Rosicrucian writings, now appear as a major motif. It is unlikely that Mathers or Westcott had studied the *Naometria* or that they were aware of the possible prophetic meaning of the figures. They simply introduced them because they were part of the traditional collection of occult imagery. But it was the Rosicrucian legend that lay at the very center of the Golden Dawn system.

Another Rosicrucian ceremony, described in the third volume of Regardie's *Golden Dawn*, is called simply "The Ritual of the Rose Cross." This is not an initiatory ritual and can be performed by an individual. Regardie says that "it encloses the aura with protection against outside influences" and that it is a good preparation for meditation.

The internal politics and final breakup of the Golden Dawn have been dealt with in detail elsewhere. However, one of the order's members, A. E. Waite, deserves special attention because of his subsequent Rosicrucian activities. Waite, whose story is told in detail in R. A. Gilbert's biography, *A. E. Waite, Magician of Many Parts* (1987),[5] was a curious mixture. Brought up as a Roman Catholic, he became interested in spiritualism and psychic phenomena, then was drawn toward the Hermetic tradition in all its forms. During his life, he wrote many books on occult subjects. He joined the Golden Dawn in 1891, left it soon afterward, then rejoined in 1896. While ceasing to be an active Catholic, he retained a love of ritual and a strong leaning toward Christian mysticism that gave him a

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[5] R. A. Gilbert, *A. E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts* (Wellingborough, England: Crucible, 1987).

dislike of the magical aspects of the Golden Dawn. In 1901, he became a Mason and was, for a time, a member of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia.*

Waite became head of the Isis-Urania temple of the Golden Dawn in 1903 and completely revised the rituals, giving them a less magical and more mystical emphasis. His reform caused dissension among the members and, in 1914, he closed down the temple and subsequently set up a new order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, whose rituals he published privately in 1916. These, like his revised Golden Dawn rituals, were Christian in emphasis. They were, however, loosely based on those of the Golden Dawn. I am indebted to R. A. Gilbert for permission to quote from the Neophyte Ritual of the order, which is in his private collection. It is described as being "issued by Frater Sacramentum Regis most honoured imperator in ordine Rosae Crucis for the direction of celebrants and the use of Fratres and Sorores under the obedience of authorised temples." At the beginning is a kind of *imprimatur:* "Certified in Conformity with the Secret Doctrine and Knowledge of the Rosy Cross. Sacramentum Regis, Keeper of the Sacred Mystery."

The ceremony is presided over by the "Honourable Frater Philosophicus, Master of the Temple" who "wears a green robe over his black habit and a collar of red silk, from which depends a circular lamina, inscribed with the letter YOD. The green colour of the Master's robe represents the growth in life which is of GOD. The symbol of the Lion is embroidered thereon, upon the left side, with the inscription: FACIES TERTIA, FACIES LEONIS. The master bears a wand surmounted by a Calvary Cross, having four circles at the end of the four arms and one circle towards the centre of the lowermost arm."

The Frater Philosophicus is assisted by a Practicus, a Theoreticus, and a Zelator, whose robes bear images of the other three members of the obligatory foursome: the Eagle, the Man, and the Bull. Also participating in the ceremony are a Frater Thurificans, a Frater Aquarius, and a Frater Ostarius.

It is interesting to compare this ritual with the corresponding Neophyte ritual in the original Golden Dawn. In the Golden Dawn ceremony, there is, for example, no mention of the Rosy Cross (this did not come until a member had progressed higher), whereas, in Waite's ritual, it is introduced at every opportunity. Furthermore, Waite's ceremony has a much more prayerful tone, with the emphasis on the seeking of spiritual attainment rather than secret knowledge. Here, for instance, is part of the Golden Dawn proceedings:

Hierophant:

> Inheritor of a Dying World, why seekest thou to enter our Sacred Hall? Why seekest thou admission to our Order?

Hegemon (speaks for the candidate):

> My Soul wanders in Darkness and seeks the Light of the Hidden Knowledge, and I believe that in this Order Knowledge of that Light may be obtained.

The equivalent part of the Waite ceremony reads:

Master of the Temple:

> Inheritor of night and time, what seek you in the places of the Soul?

Guide of the Paths (as spokesman for the Postulant):

> Through the darkness of time and night, I have come to the gate of the Temple, looking for the Light within.[6]

These differences between the two orders conform to Gerald Yorke's distinction between the "Hermetic" and "Rosicrucian" approaches, which is quoted by Kathleen Raine in her book *Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn*:

> Hermetic Orders as such are only Christian in that they include some Christianity but do not stress it. Rosicrucian orders on the other hand are primarily Christian but draw on other pre-Christian sources. In other words the Hermetists always try to become God in his anthropomorphic or in some instances theriomorphic form. They inflame themselves with prayer until they become Adonai the Lord . . . whereas the Christian approached God the Father through Christ (Adonai) but never tried to become Christ, only to become as Christ. Thus the Hermetic (or pagan) approach is as Adonai to order the averse hierarchy about, the Rosicrucian approach is to order them about through the grace of Christ or through the power of His Name."[7]

In Waite's order, the formerly "Hermetic" Golden Dawn has become totally "Rosicrucianized," that is to say, everything is done by the participants in a spirit of reverence toward the Godhead rather than identity with it.

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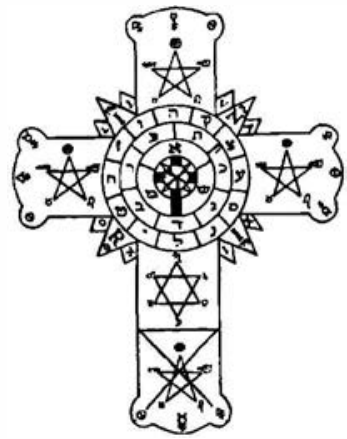
[6] Regardie, *The Golden Dawn,* Vol. 2, p. 21; and A. E. Waite, from an unpublished document for members of A. E. Waite's order, in the collection of R. A. Gilbert.

[7] Kathleen Raine, *Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks., England: Dolmen Press, 1973), pp. 13–14.

In addition to this Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, Waite also ran an "inner" Rosicrucian order, called the *Ordo Sanctissimus Rosae et Aureae Crucis*, that paralleled the old *R. R. et A. C.* and drew its members from the F.·.R.·.C.·.. It need not, however, concern us here, as further information is given in Mr. Gilbert's biography. Waite's main order, the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, continued until his death in 1942. It was later revived by his followers and still exists, in modified and exclusively Masonic form, at the present day. In its original form, it had also been open to women and non-Masons.



Chapter 11

The Rosicrucian Adept in Literature

The romantic possibilities of the Rosicrucian legend have made it a rich source of material for writers. Its use in fiction and poetry has both reflected and shaped the popular image of the brotherhood and has complemented the various attempts to continue the order actively. Before coming to the most recent phase of active Rosicrucianism, I should like to look at the way in which the figure of the adept and other aspects of the Rosicrucian legend have been treated in literature.

The Rosicrucian adept cuts a colorful figure and appears in a wide variety of roles, sometimes evil, sometimes good. The figure makes an early appearance in a strange work called *Le Comte de Gabalis*, by the Abbé Montfaucon de Villars, first published in Paris in 1670. This book came to be widely read. In it, the narrator describes how, in a series of conversations, the Count expounds the theory of elemental spirits called Gnomes, Nymphs, Sylphs, and Salamanders, who govern respectively earth, water, air, and fire. He shocks the narrator by describing how these creatures mate with mortals. He also astonishes him by making some extraordinary claims. Zoroaster, he says, was the son of the Salamander Oromasis and Vesta, the wife of Noah. Zoroaster lived 1200 years as the wisest monarch in the world and was then carried away by his father to the region of the Salamanders.

The narrator is somewhat skeptical throughout and treats the Count as a paradoxical figure, sometimes impressed by him, sometimes unconvinced. The tone of the book is wry and rather lighthearted, but there are certain passages which make the reader inclined to take de Gabalis seriously. For example, in talking of astrology, he says that "a sage governs himself by the interior Stars, and the Stars of exterior Heaven serve only to give him a more cer-

tain Knowledge of the Aspects of the Stars of the Interior Heaven, which is in each Creature."[1]

In the original version, there is no mention of the word "Rosicrucian" in either the text or the title. But when an English translation appeared, it was titled *The Count de Gabalis: Being a Diverting History of the Rosicrucian Doctrine of Spirits.* Two English translations were published in 1680, one by Philip Ayres, the other by A. Lovell, and another translation came out in 1714. An apocryphal sequel to the book was also brought out by John Yarker in the 19th century.[2] The publication of the 1714 volume was stimulated by the appearance of Alexander Pope's entertaining poem "The Rape of the Lock", which made use of de Gabalis's concept of spirits.

Pope's poem describes an incident which occurred between two of Pope's friends. Robert, Lord Petre, had cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair, and this had brought about an estrangement between the two families. Another friend suggested that Pope should write a poem to heal the breach, and the result was his satirical masterpiece, "The Rape of the Lock," which first appeared in 1712 and in which the episode is given a light-hearted treatment.

In his dedicatory letter to Arabella, Pope explains that he had decided to use, as part of the poem's foundation, "the *Rosicrucian* Doctrine of Spirits." He continues: "The *Rosicrucians* are a people I must bring You acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book call'd *Le Comte de Gabalis*. According to these Gentlemen, the four Elements are inhabited by Spirits, which they call Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs and Salamanders."[3] These creatures hover over events in Pope's poem. The Sylphs, for example, are whimsically described as guarding Arabella's lock of hair.

Another poet who made use of Rosicrucian themes was Goethe.[4] After his return to Frankfurt in 1768, following a period of study at Leipzig, Goethe became ill and was confined to bed for several months. He attributed his recovery to the taking of a secret alchemical "salt." After his recovery, he himself began practical experiments in alchemy. During his illness, Goethe read widely on Hermetic subjects, in which his interest had been aroused by his mystical friend, Fräulein von Klettenberg. Rosicrucianism must have been one of the subjects he read about, for he was still interested in

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[1] *The Count de Gabalis: Being a Diverting History of the Rosicrucian Doctrine of Spirits* (London, 1714).

[2] *The Assistant Génies, and Irreconcileable Gnomes, or Continuation to the Comte de Gabalis.* John Yarker, trans. (Bath, England: Robert H. Fryar, 1897). Originally published at La Haye, 1718.

[3] Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, Geoffrey Tillotson, ed. (Boston: Methuen, 1962).

[4] For a very thorough and interesting examination of the occult influences on Goethe, see Rolf Christian Zimmerman, *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1969).

it by the time he moved to Weimar at age 26 to become adviser to the young Duke Carl August.

The Rosy Cross features in Goethe's unfinished poem, "Die Geheimnisse" (1784–1785). Part of it reads:

> Und leichte Silber-Himmelswolken schweben
> Mit Kreuz und Rosen sich emporzuschwingen,
> Und aus der Mitte quillt ein heilig Leben
> Dreifacher Strahlen, die aus einem Punkte dringen;
> Von keinen Worten ist das Bild umgeben,
> Die dem Geheimnis Sinn und Klarheit bringen.
>
> Light, silvery clouds rise floating upward with Cross and Roses, and out of the middle springs a sacred life of three rays from a single point; no words need surround this image to bring sense and clarity to the mystery.[5]

Goethe broke off work on the poem in April of 1785. He had become tired of it, but there may have been an additional reason for his abandoning it. A month earlier, certain Rosicrucians had succeeded in getting Weishaupt's Bavarian Illuminati order suppressed and harassed by the police. As I mentioned in chapter 7, the 18th-century Rosicrucians tended to be conservative politically, whereas the Illuminati were radical. Goethe may have rightly felt that the suppression of the Illuminati went against the true Rosicrucian ideal of brotherhood. Weishaupt, who held the Chair of Canonical Law at Ingolstadt, had been in conflict with Rosicrucian elements in Bavaria. An infantry officer named Ecker had set up a Rosicrucian lodge at Burghausen which pursued alchemical studies. The lodge incurred Weishaupt's anger by sending a representative to Ingolstadt to recruit students whom Weishaupt wanted for his own order. Weishaupt wrote that "the thought of young men taking part in goldmaking and similar nonsense was unbearable to me."[6]

Though Goethe may have sympathized with Weishaupt in his conflict with the Gold- und Rosenkreuz order, he did not condemn Rosicrucianism as such, and the theme continued to interest him. On June 28, 1786, he wrote to his close friend Frau von Stein: "I have read through the Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz. There is a good fairy tale to tell there in good time, when it will be reborn. It cannot be appreciated in its old skin."[7]

The "rebirth" came nine years later when Goethe published his *Märchen* [Fairy Tale] as part of the collection of stories, *Unterhal-*

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[5] J. W. von Goethe, "Die Geheimnisse." Translation mine.
[6] Leopold Engel, *Geschichte des Illuminaten-Ordens* (Berlin: Bermühler, 1906), p. 64.
[7] J. W. von Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe*, Vol. 18 (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1951). Translation mine.

tungen deutscher Ausgewanderten [Conversations of German Expatriates]. Märchen tells a highly fanciful story involving a number of symbolic characters including a ferryman who lives by a river, a snake that eats gold, two will-o'-the-wisps, and a man with a lamp who plays a central part as a kind of adept figure. A prominent feature of the story is an underground temple in which stand four figures of kings made respectively of gold, silver, iron, and a mixture of the three metals.

The subject-matter and events bear little relation to *The Chemical Wedding*, but the two works do very clearly belong to the same genre. They share a special kind of atmosphere, as well as certain themes such as alchemy and the union of male and female. They also both carry an optimistic message of the coming transformation for mankind. In the case of Goethe's story, this transformation is symbolized by the rising of the temple out of the ground and the sudden appearance of a splendid bridge across the river.

In many fictional accounts, the figure of the Rosicrucian adept appears in more sinister light. An example is found in Percy Bysshe Shelley's novel, *St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian*, which he wrote anonymously as "A Gentleman of the University of Oxford" and which appeared in 1811. The language of the opening paragraph gives the flavor of the book:

> Red thunder-clouds, borne on the wings of the midnight whirlwind, floated, at fits, athwart the crimson-coloured orbit of the moon; the rising fierceness of the blast sighed through the stunted shrubs, which bending before its violence, inclined towards the rocks whereon they grew: over the blackened expanse of heaven, at intervals, was spread the blue lightning's flash; it played upon the granite heights, and with momentary brilliancy, disclosed the terrific scenery of the Alps, whose gigantic and misshapen summits, reddened by the transitory moonbeam, were crossed by black fleeting fragments of the tempest-clouds . . . In this scene, then, at this horrible and tempestous hour . . . stood Wolfstein.[8]

The grandiose style bears little relation to the later Shelley, but the work has, nevertheless, a certain force. It tells the story of a young man named Wolfstein, the penniless son of a noble German family, who has been exiled because of a youthful scandal. At the beginning of the story, he falls in with some bandits in the Alps, one of whom is a mysterious individual called Ginotti, a man of giant stature and commanding presence, who establishes a strange hold over

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[8] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian* (London: J. J. Stockdale, 1811); Reprint: *Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Wolfstein. After Wolfstein has left the bandits, Ginotti follows him in various disguises and finally has a conversation with Wolfstein in which he explains that the urge which drives him is a desire for immortality.

"From my earliest youth," he recounts, "before it was quenched by complete satiation, *curiosity*, and a desire of unveiling the latent mysteries of nature was the passion by which all other emotions of my mind were intellectually organized. This desire first led me to cultivate, and with success, the various branches of learning which led to the gates of wisdom." He goes on to explain that he conceived a horror of death and then eventually found the secret of prolonging life, which he proposes to demonstrate to Wolfstein in the vault of a ruined abbey. Here the final scene of the story takes place. The devil appears in a flash of lightning and a burst of thunder. "On a sudden Ginotti's frame mouldered to a gigantic skeleton, yet two pale and ghastly flames glared in his eyeless sockets." Wolfstein falls dead, and Ginotti is condemned to "a dateless and hopeless eternity of horror."[9]

Another story in which the Rosicrucian adept is seen as an evil figure is a curious novel called *Die Rosenkreuzer in Wien* [The Rosicrucians in Vienna] by Eduard Breier, published in 1852. It describes how members of a Rosicrucian lodge in Vienna are engaged in various subversive activities. One of them, a man named Georg Philip Wucherer, prints pamphlets written by his nephew on such themes as the necessity for brothels in Vienna. They are visited by a man with a black patch over one eye who turns out to be Cagliostro and announces: "The city of Vienna, however big, has no secrets from me. I belong to the privileged few of this earth who experience all that they wish to know."[10] Another character is an old man from Berlin called Baron Liebenstein who arrives in Vienna with a box full of alchemical equipment and later on turns out to be a Rosicrucian Lodge Master.

A less jaundiced view of the Rosicrucian brotherhood is presented by Edward Bulwer Lytton (later Lord Lytton) in his novel *Zanoni*.[11] The Rosicrucian theme is firmly established in the introduction, in which the author, posing as editor of the text, describes how, as a young man, he was in the habit of frequenting an old bookshop in Covent Garden, whose dusty shelves were stacked with volumes on alchemy, astrology, Qabalah, and related subjects. Its owner, whom Bulwer-Lytton calls by his initial "D," was evidently well versed in these subjects and always reluctant to part with his books. This character is based on a real bookseller named John

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[9] Shelley, *St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian.*

[10] Eduard Breier, *Die Rosenkreuzer in Wien* [The Rosicrucians in Vienna], 1852. Translation mine.

[11] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni* (Boston: Little Brown, 1896).

Denley, who kept a shop in Catherine Street, Covent Garden, from approximately 1790 to 1840. What is not known is whether the meeting described in the introduction as taking place in the shop had any basis in fact.

"It so chanced," the account says, "that some years ago, in my younger days, whether of authorship or life, I felt a desire to make myself acquainted with the true origin of the singular sect known by the name of Rosicrucians. Dissatisfied with the scanty and superficial accounts to be found in the worlds usually referred to on the subject, it struck me as possible that Mr. D–'s collection, which was rich, not only in black-letter, but in manuscripts, might contain some more accurate and authentic records of that famous brotherhood—written, who knows? by one of their own order. . . . Accordingly I repaired to what, doubtless, I ought to be ashamed to confess, was once one of my favourite haunts."[12]

On entering the shop the young man finds the owner in conversation with an old and venerable-looking customer whom he is treating with great respect. They are talking about an "August fraternity," and the young man, pricking up his ears, enters the discussion by asking the bookseller about material on the Rosicrucians. The account continues as follows:

> "The Rosicrucians!" repeated the old gentleman, and in his turn he surveyed me with deliberate surprise. "Who but a Rosicrucian could explain the Rosicrucian mysteries! And can you imagine that any members of that sect, the most jealous of all secret societies, would themselves lift the veil that hides the Isis of their wisdom from the world?"[13]

After they have talked for a while, however, the old man says that if they meet again, "I may be able to direct your researches to the proper sources of intelligence." Four days later, the young man, while out riding, meets the stranger at the foot of the Highgate Hill, mounted on a black pony and accompanied by a black dog. He is invited to the old man's house near by. After this, he becomes a regular visitor and benefits from his friend's great store of learning. The old man tells him that he has written a book and extracts from his young friend a promise to prepare it for the public. Accordingly, after his friend's death, the young man receives a manuscript in cipher, together with a key. The translation proves to be a difficult task and takes him several years. The resulting narrative is presented as the text of *Zanoni*.

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[12] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*, p. xii.
[13] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*, p. xiii.

In the story, Zanoni and his spiritual master, Mejnour, are the last survivors of an ancient brotherhood; both of them have prolonged their existence through the elixir of life. Zanoni loses his immortality by falling in love and finally sacrificing himself heroically for his beloved. There are various passages in the book which confirm the Rosicrucian vein established in the introduction. At the beginning of chapter 5, Book III, for example, the narrator writes:

> Venerable Brotherhood, so sacred and so little known, from whose secret and precious archives the materials for this history have been drawn; ye who have retained, from century to century, all that time has spared of the August and venerable science,—thanks to you, if now, for the first time, some record of the thoughts and actions of no false and self-styled luminary of your Order be given, however imperfectly, to the world. Many have called themselves of your band; many spurious pretenders have been so called by the learned ignorance which still, baffled and perplexed, is driven to confess that it knows nothing of your origin, your ceremonies or doctrines, not even if you still have local habitation on the earth.[14]

Bulwer-Lytton was clearly well versed in Rosicrucian literature. He had read *Le Comte de Gabalis*, as he quotes it in *Zanoni*, and later he corresponded with Hargrave Jennings, author of *The Rosicrucians, Their Rites and Mysteries*, which was first published in 1870. Jennings sent Lord Lytton, as he then was, a copy of the book, accompanied by a rather sad letter, in which he describes how he had undergone prolonged literary toil for little reward and had led an economical and restrained life. His book on the Rosicrucians had, he said, taken him twenty years of research. The main object of the letter was to ask Lytton "to assist to procure for me some moderate, modest position or place . . . as secretary or librarian, or as some such lettered officer, for duties resembling which I am very fit."

Lytton's reply is interesting for the light that it throws on his attitude toward the Rosicrucians:

> Dear Sir—I thank you sincerely for your very flattering letter and for the deeply interesting work with which it is accompanied. There are reasons why I cannot enter into the subject of the "Rosicrucian Brotherhood," a society still existing, but not under any name by which it can be recognised by those without its pale. But you have with much learning and much acuteness, traced its connection with early and symbolical religions, and no better book upon

[14] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*, p. 165.

> such a theme has been written, or indeed could be written unless a member of the Fraternity were to break the vow which enjoins him to secrecy. . . . I am truly concerned to hear that your literary labours have been less productive of profit than honour. And should I hear of any one requiring a secretary or assistant, I will not fail to recommend him to secure to his aid your scholarship and talents.

At the foot of the letter is a postscript which reads: "Some time ago a sect pretending to style itself 'Rosicrucians' and arrogating full knowledge of the mysteries of the craft, communicated with me, and in reply I sent them the cipher sign of the 'Initiate' not one of them could construe it."[15]

It is fascinating to learn from this letter that Lytton could so positively affirm that the Rosicrucians still existed, if under some other name. His mention of his own "reasons" for silence and the tone of the first paragraph suggest a personal involvement. Possibly his account in the introduction to *Zanoni* is based on an actual encounter with a member of some highly secret Rosicrucian group who either initiated him or revealed a certain amount and then enjoined him to silence.

It is hard to believe that Lytton really considered Jennings's book to be the best that had been or could be written by a non-initiate. It is an extremely muddled work which brings in a lot of irrelevant information. Nevertheless, it was widely read and must have been responsible for many people's ideas of what Rosicrucianism was all about. Jennings uses the Rosicrucian heading as an excuse for rambling over such topics as the round towers of Ireland, the symbolism of the fleur-de-lis, the menhirs of Brittany, the Order of the Garter, and King Arthur's Round Table. The thread running through the book is Jennings's belief in the universal worship of a fire principle as the animating force in the universe, represented in the physical world by the male sexual organ. But the theme is never adequately developed, and the whole book is a frustrating series of false trails.

A much more fruitful source of Rosicrucian material is the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, mentioned in a previous chapter. One of its members was W. B. Yeats who, in his poems and stories, often introduces Rosicrucian themes and the image of the rose. Another member of the Golden Dawn was Aleister Crowley,[16] whose poem "The Rose and the Cross" was published in the *Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*:

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[15] Jennings' letter and Lytton's reply are among the Lytton papers at Country Hall, Hertford, England.

[16] At one time, Crowley used notepaper on which the title "M.D. Damc." appeared after his name, a humorous reference to the fact that Christian Rosenkreuz is stated in the *Fama* to have received medical knowledge at Damar, in Arabia.

Out of the seething cauldron of my woes,
    Where sweets and salt and bitterness I flung;
    Where charmed music gathered from my tongue,
And where I chained strange archipelagoes
Of fallen stars; where fiery passion flows
    A curious bitumen; where among
    The glowing medley moved the tune unsung
Of perfect love: thence grew the Mystic Rose.

Its myriad petals of divided light;
    Its leaves of the most radiant emerald;
Its heart of fire like rubies. At the sight
    I lifted up my heart to God and called:
How shall I pluck this dream of my desire?
And lo! there shaped itself the Cross of Fire! [17]

Crowley here beautifully and vividly expresses the mystical aspects of the Rosicrucian symbol.

Other writers have linked the Rosy Cross primarily with alchemy. One such was the German physician and alchemist, Demeter Georgiewitz-Weitzer (1873–1949), who wrote a number of books under the name of G. W. Surya. These included works on Paracelsian healing methods and a novel, *Moderne Rosenkreuzer* [Modern Rosicrucians], published in 1907 and re-issued in 1914. Some information about Surya is given in a letter from Dr. Kellner of Hamburg which is attached to the Warburg Institute copy of this book. Dr. Kellner's uncle evidently knew the author. Surya had a healing practice in Munich, where he often found himself in conflict with the representatives of orthodox medicine. To the end of his life, he remained very poor. He was evidently a kind, helpful person, deeply immersed in the study of Paracelsian spagyric methods of healing. Astrology and botany were among his related interests, and he knew the occult correspondences of plants. He also had his own laboratory.

In his preface to the second edition of *Moderne Rosenkreuzer*, Surya makes some remarks which remind us of the heralding of a coming New Age in the Rosicrucian manifestos. "These facts," he writes, meaning the recent resurgence of interest in occult matters, "speak clearly for the fact that for mankind a new spiritual epoch has dawned. And it cannot be long before this spiritual light stimulates all arts and sciences, indeed our whole culture, to new achievements." Further on he says: "Unfortunately, however, we have seen in the past seven years the confirmation of another empirical principle in the world's history, namely that the advent of a

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[17] Aleister Crowley, "The Rose and the Cross," in *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (London: Oxford University Press, 1900), p. 524.

new spiritual epoch is nearly always accompanied by political upheavals, wars and revolutions, even abnormal natural events."[18]

Surya emphasizes that he himself does not belong to any secret school or brotherhood. He advises all those who seek the truth to shun secret schools, especially those which have "Unknown Chiefs." He believes that true Rosicrucians are still in existence. "But where," he asks, "are they to be found? Certainly not in the pseudo-Rosicrucian societies which demand high annual contributions from their members and in return give their novices no more wisdom than could be cheaply obtained in any bookshop."[19] So if a person does not wish to be disillusioned, Surya warns, he should steer clear of such societies.

The story of Surya's novel revolves around Stefan Brandt, a Viennese who, as a young man, becomes ill with tuberculosis and goes to Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) to recover. There he meets a mysterious Dr. Nicolson in whose villa he goes to live and who cures him. Dr. Nicolson has a laboratory in the villa. As he explains to Brandt:

> I prepare most of my spagyric remedies myself and at the same time pursue problems which lie somewhat remote from our modern science but which interest me a great deal since these, if the answers to them are found—or, to be more accurate, re-discovered—will be of great value to mankind. Occult botany, spagyric healing and lastly Hermetic chemistry—these have for many years been my favorite studies.[20]

A series of conversations that Brandt has with Nicolson and others are the vehicle Surya uses to expound his ideas on healing, karma, reincarnation, astrology, alchemy, and his philosophy of life in general.

In Surya's novel, Dr. Nicolson follows the pattern of the good Rosicrucian adept. The villainous type reappears in Temple Thurston's story, *The Rosicrucian*, in the collection of the same title first published in 1930. The story opens with an incident which is based on a well-known anecdote about the Comte de Saint Germain. When asked by a countess at a party if he was the son of a man she had known in Venice fifty years earlier, Saint Germain replied that he himself was that man. In Temple Thurston's story, the narrator witnesses the meeting of two men, an older and a younger, outside a clockmaker's shop in the Haymarket. The younger—or rather

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[18] G. W. Surya, *Moderne Rosenkreuzer* [Modern Rosicrucians] (1907, 1914). Translation mine.
[19] G. W. Surya, *Moderne Rosenkreuzer*. Translation mine.
[20] G. W. Surya, *Moderne Rosenkreuzer*. Translation mine.

younger-looking—is wearing a long, dark cape and a hat of Spanish or Mexican appearance. The apparently older one asks:

"Excuse me if I've made a mistake, but is your name Gollancz?"

The man did not swing round. He was not startled out of his reverie at that shop window by this sudden approach. If that was his name, he was certainly not surprised at hearing it spoken so casually in the street.

"My name is Gollancz," he replied.

"Then I think I must have known your father up at Oxford. He was at Corpus with me."

The young man smiled . . .

"You're Crawshay-Martin, then," he said in a voice that was quite unperturbed by this unexpected recognition.

"Yes. But how did you know that?"

"I remember you. It was not my father. You and I were at Corpus together."[21]

Gollancz then throws open his cloak and stretches out his hand to reveal "a plain gold ring, setting an intaglio bearing some gnostic sign." Later Crawshay-Martin explains to the narrator that Gollancz is a Rosicrucian. The narrator reflects: "A Rosicrucian—a brother of the secret order of the Rosy Cross! Walking in the Haymarket in broad daylight in the twentieth century! . . . I had read of Rosicrucians in the later Middle Ages. Vaguely I suppose I knew that the order still existed. . . . But to meet a Rosicrucian in a London street!"[22]

It emerges that Crawshay-Martin had a Rosicrucian ancestor and that he himself had inherited a Rosicrucian manual "setting out their practices and all those mysterious rites connected with the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross." This document Gollancz wishes to obtain, by foul means if necessary. The story ends with Crawshay-Martin's mysterious death and the disappearance of the manual from his room.

One of the most perceptive fictional treatments of the Rosicrucian theme occurs in a short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, called "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in the collection of his stories titled *Labyrinths*.[23] The story deals with a group of people who decide to create an imaginary country and to present it to the world as though it really existed. Later, they decide that a single country is not enough and that they must invent an entire planet. They compile an encyclopedia about this planet, containing minutely detailed descriptions of its geography, history, customs, reli-

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[21] Temple Thurston, *The Rosicrucian* (1930).

[22] Thurston, *The Rosicrucian.*

[23] Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," translated by James E. Irby, in *Labyrinths*, Donald A. Yates and James E. Kirby, eds. (London: Penguin, 1970).

gions, languages, and science. Parts of this encyclopedia are then leaked out so that they begin to be quoted. Little artifacts from the imaginary world are also carefully planted—a curiously shaped compass with an inscription from one of the imaginary languages, a tiny cone made of some unknown metal, so heavy that it can hardly be lifted. Gradually this mysterious world starts to fascinate people to such an extent that the real world begins to imitate it.

When Borges wrote this story, he clearly had the Rosicrucian movement in mind, because he attributes one of the books about the imaginary planet to Johann Valentin Andreae. In Borges' story the group of people behind the invention is called "Orbis Tertius," the "Third Sphere." His account of its emergence is as follows:

> One night in Lucerne or London, in the early seventeenth century, the splendid history has its beginning. A secret and benevolent society . . . arose to invent a country. Its vague initial programme included "hermetic studies," philanthropy and the cabala. From the first period dates the curious book of Andreä. After a few years of secret conclaves and premature syntheses it was understood that one generation was not sufficient to give articulate form to a country. They resolved that each of the masters should elect a disciple who would continue his work. This hereditary arrangement prevailed.[24]

The story goes on to relate how the movement spread to America, where it was supported by an eccentric millionaire—it was he who had the idea to invent a whole planet. Toward the end of the story Borges writes: "A scattered dynasty of solitary men has changed the face of the world. Their task continues."[25]

In allegorizing the Rosicrucian movement in this way, Borges brilliantly conveys the notion of a group of people who decide to change the world by creating a mythology, and he subtly suggests to the reader that perhaps the real Rosicrucian brotherhood was created in a similar manner.

The authors of the original Rosicrucian manifestos would probably have been amused and certainly not a little surprised at the strange literary progeny of their brotherhood. The romantic array of heroic and villainous adepts are nevertheless an important part of the development of the mythology. And it is certainly true that, without the Rosicrucian legend, a great deal of entertaining and interesting poetry and fiction would never have been written.

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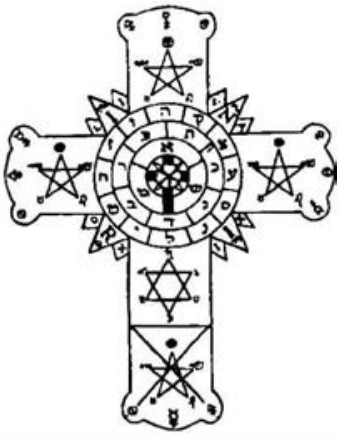
[24] Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Labyrinths*, p. 39.
[25] Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Labyrinths*, p. 43.



Chapter 12

Modern Rosicrucian Movements

Much of the most recent episode in the story of the Rosy Cross takes place in America, which has become a major breeding-ground for Rosicrucian off-shoots. It is not possible, in the space of one chapter, to give more than a brief overview of these off-shoots, which have recently been dealt with in greater detail in Robert Vanloo's study *Les Rose-Croix du Nouveau Monde*.[1]

It is difficult to establish when Rosicrucianism first came to America, though a great deal has been made of a German mystical community which emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1694 and is claimed to have had Rosicrucian connections. The group was led by Johannes Kelpius, a man steeped in theosophical and millenialist ideas, who had been a leading member of a Pietist community established by the scientist and theologian Johann Jacob Zimmerman. On the eve of departure for America, Zimmerman died and the group, headed by Kelpius, established itself on the banks of the Wissahickon River near what is now called Germantown. The evidence for their connection with Rosicrucianism is given as follows by A. E. Waite:

> It seems colourable that a few among them, or—let us say—Kelpius at least, were after some manner integrated in the Order and may have communicated that which was theirs to all or many of the pilgrims. The reason is that they are said to have carried with them, and to have followed, the rule of a priceless Rosicrucian MS. . . . it represents an early stage of the SECRET SYMBOLS, published at Altona in 1785–8. . . . Historically and bibliographically

[1] Robert Vanloo, *Les Rose-Croix du Nouveau Monde* (Paris: Claire Vigne, 1996).

> it is therefore of the first importance, as apparently a real Rosicrucian text and seeming to indicate (1) that the German Rosy Cross in the hiddenness of the late seventeenth century was that Christian Theosophical Order which Fludd represented it to be in his earlier day, indeed *ab origine symboli*, and (2) that the Altona circle did not produce an invention on their own part nearly one hundred years later but had developed and extended only.[2]

A slightly later German Pietist settlement, Conrad Beissel's austere Ephrata commune in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which flourished between 1735 and 1765, also appears to have been influenced by Rosicrucian ideas, both in its utopian aims and way of life and possibly in some of its ritual practices. Ephrata's remarkable buildings remain preserved today as a museum.

The first man, however, to promote Rosicrucianism widely in America was Paschal Beverly Randolph. Born in 1825, Randolph became an orphan at an early age and after a hard childhood, worked as a sailor from the age 15 to 20, traveling widely. He subsequently became a dyer and barber while pursuing a course of self-education and wide reading. During the American Civil War, he led a unit of black soldiers for the Federal cause. After the war, at the request of his friend President Lincoln, he worked for nearly three years in Louisiana as an educator of emancipated slaves. He spent the remainder of his life mostly in Boston, publicizing his own brand of Rosicrucianism and writing an extraordinary range of books including works of anthropology, philosophy, and fiction.

Randolph was often described as having African blood, but he himself denied this. "My mother," he wrote "was a beautiful *sang melée* of various strains of blood. She had some Madagascan, French, Spanish, Indian and Oriental in her, all of which I have, and several others besides, as English, Celtic, Cymrian, Teutonic and Moorish."[3] He began his occult activities in about 1858 and built up a Rosicrucian organization under his leadership. Although thin and frail in appearance, he is reported to have been a powerful and spell-binding lecturer. In 1872, Randolph was arrested in Boston and put on trial for teaching free love in his writings. The prosecuting attorney described him as an "agapistic sage" and said that he was "beyond all reasonable doubts *the* most *dangerous* man and author on the soil of America if not of the entire globe."[4] Randolph,

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[2] A. E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (London: Rider & Co, 1924), chapter 23, pp. 605–606.

[3] Dr. R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rose Cross Order. A Short Sketch of the History of the Rose Cross Order in America, Together with a Sketch of the Life of Dr. P. B. Randolph, the Founder of the Order. With Introduction and Notes by Dr. R. Swinburne Clymer* (Allentown, PA, 1916).

[4] *The Rose Cross Order.*

however, defended himself with his usual eloquence and was acquitted.

Though Randolph has been branded by some as a charlatan, his writings do not suggest this. He was honest enough to admit that his Rosicrucianism came mainly from within his own mind. In his work *Eulis!* he writes:

> I studied Rosicrucianism, found it suggestive and loved its mysticisms. So I called myself The Rosicrucian, and gave my thought to the world as Rosicrucian thought; and lo! the world greeted with loud applause what it supposed had its origin and birth elsewhere than in the soul of P. B. Randolph.
>
> Very nearly *all* that I have given as Rosicrucianism originated in my soul; and scarce a single thought, only suggestions, have I borrowed from those who, in ages past, called themselves by that name.[5]

Nevertheless, Randolph asserts that he was, until he resigned, "Grand Master of the only temple of the Order on the globe."

The teaching that Randolph outlines in his *Eulis!* is largely concerned with the correct use of sex and its powers. He himself claims to have received an initiation into sexual magic in the Middle East:

> One night—it was in far-off Jerusalem or Bethlehem, I really forget which—I made love to, and was loved by, a dusky maiden of Arabic blood. I of her, and that experience, learned—not directly, but by suggestion—the fundamental principle of the White Magic of Love; subsequently I became affiliated with some dervishes and fakirs of whom, by suggestion still, I found the road to other knowledges; and of these devout practicers of a simple, but sublime and holy magic, I obtained additional clues—little threads of suggestion, which being persistently followed, led my Soul into labyrinths of knowledge. . . . I became practically, what I was naturally—a mystic, and in time chief of the lofty brethren; taking clues left by the masters, and pursuing them farther than they had ever been before; actually discovering the ELIXIR OF LIFE; the universal Solvent, or celestial Alkahest; the water of beauty and perpetual youth, and the Philosopher's Stone—all of which this book contains; but only findable by him who searches well.[6]

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[5] Paschal Beverly Randolph, *Eulis! The History of Love* (Toledo, OH: Randolph Publications, 1874), pp. 56–57.

[6] P. B. Randolph, *Eulis!*, p. 58.

It is interesting that Randolph, having discovered sexual magic independently, should have come to the conclusion that this was the true basis of Rosicrucianism. As I have shown already, there is evidence that earlier Rosicrucians were interested in sex as a magical force and described it symbolically in their treatises. Sexuality is a curiously recurrent theme among Rosicrucian apologists, and Randolph clearly regards it as central to the whole philosophy.

> I am induced to say thus much in order to disabuse the public mind relative to Rosicrucianism, which is but one of our outer doors—and which was *not* originated by Christian Rosenkreuz; but merely revived, and replanted in Europe by him subsequent to his return from oriental lands, whither, like myself and hundreds of others, he went for initiation. . . . The Rosicrucian system is, and never was other else than a door to the ineffable Grand Temple of Eulis.[7]

By Eulis, Randolph means his own system of sexual teaching. The basis of this system is the common occult belief that, in sexual union, the male and female secretions unite to form a powerful current. If this current is in disequilibrium, such as through solitary or incomplete sex, then disorders result. His teaching is concerned with the conduct of everyday life and marital relations so that the current flows correctly. Randolph also refers to another secretion, common to both sexes, "which is only present under the most fierce and intense amative passion in either man or woman." This fluid is "the union of magnetism, electricity and nerve-aura. . . . When it is present in wedlock's sacred rite then Power reigns and Love strikes deep root in the soul of the child that may then be begotten." Care must be taken, he says, that this powerful force is not abused.

A footnote at the end of the book states: "The Provisional Grand Lodge of Eulis established in Tennessee, was dissolved by me—the creating, appointing and dissolving power—on June 13, 1874. I intend to re-establish Eulis in organic form before I pass from earth."[8]

Randolph's teachings were later taken up by one branch of the American Rosicrucian movement which I shall come to shortly. But meanwhile, Masonic Rosicrucianism had gained a foothold in America, developing roughly as follows. The formation of the Rosicrucian Society in England (later called the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia) had created interest among American Freemasons. In 1878, a party of Masons from Pennsylvania visited the York college of the Soc. Ros., where they received the grade of Zelator. This group then

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[7] P. B. Randolph, *Eulis!*, pp. 58–59.

[8] This and the quoted material above, both come from P. B. Randolph, *Eulis!*

applied to the Soc. Ros. for a warrant to start an American branch. When they received no response, they applied to the Societas Rosicruciana in Scotia, from which the English society derived. This application was successful, and the Soc. Ros. in Scotia chartered a Philadelphia college for Pennsylvania in 1879 and a New York City college for New York State in 1880.

In April 1880, these two colleges established a High Council for the whole of the United States, titled the Societas Rosicruciana Republicae Americae, with Charles E. Meyer of Pennsylvania as its first Supreme Magus. In the same year, three other colleges received charters: in Boston for Massachusetts, in Baltimore for Maryland, and in Burlington for Vermont. Many other states received charters at intervals over the next half-century. Meanwhile, in 1912, the High Council had officially adopted the rituals used by the English and Scottish Rosicrucian societies.

The Societas Rosicruciana Republicae Americae later came to be called the Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (S.R.I.C.F.). If the information in the first edition of this book is still accurate, the society remains active on a comparatively small scale and publishes a journal called *The Rosicrucian Fama*. Like its English counterpart, it is open only to Master Masons and is not really an order, but a sort of Masonic literary society. In 1980, it had seventeen colleges with a total of 733 members.

The original Masonic Rosicrucian society in the United States has also given birth to an offshoot which has since dropped its Masonic connection. One of the members of the Boston college (chartered in 1880) was Sylvester C. Gould, editor of an American *Notes and Queries* and of a periodical called *The Rosicrucian Brotherhood*, which ran from 1907 to 1909. In 1908, Gould collaborated with a number of other American Rosicrucians to start a new body, based on broad principles and opening its doors to all true seekers. The result was the formation of the Societas Rosicruciana in America. Gould died in 1909 and the society was later taken over by Dr. George Winslow Plummer, who wrote a number of books under the pseudonym "Khei," including *The Art of Rosicrucian Healing* and *Principles and Practice for Rosicrucians*.

In the 1927 manual of the society, Plummer describes its grade system, which corresponds to the familiar degrees found in the Gold- und Rosenkreuz and perpetuated by the Golden Dawn. At that time, the order was ruled by a High Council of thirteen members of the Ninth Degree, including an imperator elected for life. Only Master Masons were admitted to this council, though the lower grades were open to non-Masons of both sexes. In the more recent publicity literature put out by the society, however, there is no mention of Masonry.

The society's information sheet, addressed "To All Who Seek," states that it is "the American organization formed by properly qual-

ified initiates to propagate the Ancient Wisdom teachings in the Western world. This body is also known as the Societas Rosicruciana in America, and is a part of the worldwide age-old Rosicrucian Fraternity. . . ."[9] The booklet goes on to say that "the sole object of the Society is the spiritual, moral and intellectual development of its members, and, indirectly, of all mankind. This is accomplished through teachings which correlate Religion, Science and Philosophy, particularly in connection with Mystical Christianity and Hermetism. . . . Above all, the Society's Teachings guide the student to a constructive life of right thinking, right acting and right speaking; they align him definitely with Nature's Constructive Principle, stimulating him to make the most of the opportunities afforded by every day of mortal life." The society's teachings, as outlined in another booklet, include a respect for all religions and a belief in reincarnation. The tone of the society's literature is, on the whole, refreshingly sensible and unsensational.

A great deal of contact took place between emerging American Rosicrucian groups and their European counterparts and, in the process, a fair amount of chicanery went on. One curious affair involving the so-called "Master Letters," is recountered by Ellic Howe in his *Urania's Children*. One of the figures involved was the German astrologer and occultist Hugo Vollrath, who ran the Theosophical Publishing House at Leipzig between the wars. Though a somewhat disreputable character, Vollrath evidently had a sense of humor. He was accustomed to wear a fez at his office because, he explained, "it keeps my aura in place." He had for a time been a disciple and secretary of Franz Hartmann (1838–1912), a Theosophist and prolific occult writer whose works included much on Rosicrucian themes. Vollrath posed, under the name of Walter Heilmann, as the secretary of a fictitious Rosicrucian society in Germany and "collected subscriptions from gullible people, mostly women, who received impressive diplomas and 'esoteric instructions' in the form of 'Master Letters'. . . . The Rosicrucian 'Master Letters' were not written by Vollrath but consisted of material translated from the pseudo-Rosicrucian nonsense published in California by . . . Max Heindel."[10]

Heindel claimed that, while in Europe in 1907, he obtained the guidance of a marvelous being who, he later learned, was a senior representative of the secret Rosicrucian Order. After several visits during which he was tested, this adept took him to a temple of the Rose Cross near the border between Germany and Bohemia. Here he spent about a month receiving personal instruction from the elder brethren. This teaching was later set down by Heindel in his book *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, first published by the Ros-

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[9] Written by George W. Plummer, and published in 1927.

[10] Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children* (London: William Kimber, 1967), chapter 6.

icrucian Fellowship in 1909. Heindel was also an astrologer, and the book strongly reflects his astrological interests.

> Like all other Mystery Orders, Heindel writes, "the Order of the Rosicrucians is formed on cosmic lines: If we take balls of even size and try how many it will take to cover one and hide it from view, we shall find that it will require 12 to conceal a thirteenth ball. The ultimate division of physical matter, the true atom, found in interplanetary space, is thus grouped in twelve around one. The twelve signs of the Zodiac enveloping our Solar System, the twelve semi-tones of the musical scale comprising the octave, the twelve apostles who clustered around Christ, etc., are other examples of the grouping of 12 and 1. The Rosicrucian Order is therefore also composed of 12 Brothers and a 13th."[11]

Seven of these brothers, Heindel explains, go out into the world to perform good works. The remaining five never leave the temple; and, though they possess physical bodies, all their work is done "from the inner Worlds." The mysterious thirteenth, who is head of the order, acts as a link with an even more mysterious "higher Central Council composed of Hierophants of the Greater Mysteries, who do not deal with ordinary humanity at all, but only with graduates of the lesser Mysteries." Gathered around the brothers of the Rose Cross, Heindel says, are a number of "lay brothers," people who live in various parts of the Western World but are able to leave their bodies consciously and attend the nightly services in the temple where the thirteenth brother officiates invisibly.[12]

Heindel's Rosicrucian Fellowship is, according to this book, open to "anyone who is not a hypnotist, *professional* medium, clairvoyant, palmist or astrologer."

> When a student of the Rosicrucian teachings has become so imbued with the verity thereof, that he is prepared to sever his connection with all other occult or religious orders—the Christian Churches and Fraternal Orders are excepted—he may assume the Obligation which admits him to the degree of Probationer.[13]

Heindel's group is today one of several active organizations in the United States using the name "Rosicrucian." Another is the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis, which traces its ancestry from P. B. Randolph, but

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[11] Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* (Oceanside, CA: Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1909), p. 521–522.
[12] Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, p. 523.
[13] Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, p. 530.

whose main guiding force was R. Swinburne Clymer. The most influential American Rosicrucian group is the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (usually known as AMORC), founded by H. Spencer Lewis (1883–1939). Among these three groups there has been quite a lot of hostility, culminating in a long feud between Clymer and AMORC.

Clymer's link with Randolph was via Freeman B. Dowd, author of *The Temple of the Rosy Cross*, who had taken over from Randolph on the latter's death. Clymer became head of the order in the early 1920s. He sets out his version of Rosicrucianism in *The Book of Rosicruciae*. Much of this is highly inaccurate and fanciful, but some of what he says is sensible, as for example when he writes: "The legend of Christian Rosenkreuz, in whom we do not see an historical person, despite what many persons unfamiliar with the facts have said and written, symbolizes the representation of a 'collective entirety,' the culmination of an association of men of kindred ideas and outlook. . . ." He makes a distinction between a "Rose Cross" and a "Rosicrucian." The former he says, is "applied only in relation to a certain traditional form, that of Christian *esotericism*, or, perhaps one should say with greater precision, that of Christian Hermeticism."[14] Being a Rose Cross, he maintains, is a matter of a state of spiritual attainment and not of membership in an order, though individuals entitled to the designation of Rose Cross have inspired certain associations which for that reason are called "Rosicrucian."

Clymer's arch-rival was H. Spencer Lewis of AMORC, a man of undoubted creative gifts, who succeeded in building up the most conspicuous of the American Rosicrucian organizations.[15] According to the AMORC *Rosicrucian Manual*, Lewis' Rosicrucian authority was initially obtained as follows.

> After many years of continuous scientific and psychic research . . . he made his first contact with the work of the Rosicrucians through obtaining copies of the secret manuscripts of the first American Rosicrucians, who established their headquarters near Philadelphia in 1694. A member of the English branch which sponsored the first movement in America, Mrs May Banks-Stacey, descendant of Oliver Cromwell and the D'Arcys of France, placed in his hands such papers as had been officially transmitted to her by the last of the first American Rosicrucians, with the Jewel and Key of authority received by her from the Grand Master of the Order of India, while an officer of the work in that country.

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[14] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Book of Rosicruciae* (Quakertown, PA: The Philosophical Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 2–3.

[15] For a detailed account of Lewis' life and career, see Robert Vanloo's *Les Rose-Croix du Nouveau Monde* (Paris: Claire Vigne, 1966).

> For several years correspondence was maintained with different representatives of the foreign Jurisdictions until proper investigation could be made establishing the worthiness of Dr Lewis to carry out the warrants then in his possession. Finally in 1909 he was directed to make his appearance before certain high officials in France. He visited Toulouse, the ancient centre of the Rosicrucian international conclave, and returned from that country in possession of further authority.[16]

Lewis always set great store by his links with European Rosicrucians. Another Continental group with whom he had connections was the Ordo Templi Orientis, of which Franz Hartmann was a member. The O.T.O. was founded in 1906 by a colorful German occultist, fringe Mason, and adventurer called Theodor Reuss (1855–1924), who gave a charter to Lewis in 1921. After a number of false starts, Lewis' organization, AMORC, became properly established in Florida and later moved to California, where it began to build up its large following and where its headquarters have remained ever since. Its teachings and system of ritual are eclectic, incorporating elements of the Golden Dawn, alchemy, Qabalah, and other traditions.

Lewis was credited by his followers with various miraculous powers, including that of transmutation. A demonstration of this took place in New York on June 22, 1916. The following account of the event is given by Wittemans in his book, *A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians.*

> Fifteen of the twenty-seven members had received from the Imperator a card, telling what ingredients and objects they must bring for the operation. They promised to keep secret the names on the cards and to join the fifteen parts of the formula only three years after the death of the Imperator. After prayer and an address by the latter treating upon the laws of matter, a piece of zinc . . . was placed upon a little plate of china-porcelain, over the fire of a crucible; the various ingredients, among them the petals of a rose, were then presented by fifteen brothers and sisters . . . to the Imperator who deposited them one after another upon the plate. After the sixteen minutes required, during which the operator concentrated a little known power of mind, the piece of zinc was transformed into gold, as was chemically established.[17]

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[16] AMORC, *Rosicrucian Manual* (San Jose, CA: AMORC, 1948), 11th edition, p. 130.
[17] Frans Wittemans, *A New and Authentic History of the Rosicrucians,* Durvad (F. G. Davis) trans. (London: Rider, 1938; Chicago: Aries Press, 1938), p. 156.

Soon after Lewis' organization moved to California and began to flourish on a large scale, Lewis found himself under attack from a number of quarters, including an ex-member of AMORC called George L. Smith. Eventually, Lewis filed a libel suit against Smith with the final result that Smith was enjoined by the court from engaging in any further propaganda against AMORC. Attacks continued to be made, however, by Clymer and by a disaffected AMORC member called Alfred H. Saunders who had been removed from the editorship of the AMORC magazine some years earlier.

Finally, AMORC felt impelled to counterattack in the form of a pamphlet issued in 1935 under the heading *Audi Alteram Partem* [Hear the Other Side], this takes the form of a report by a "National Membership Defense Committee" which had apparently examined the accusations brought by Clymer and found them to be false. Clymer himself is described in the report as "a German or Dutch printer who discovered years ago that it was more profitable to spend all of his time at the type case than in farming . . . especially when it enables him to foster and glorify some of the weirdest notions that a human mind ever harboured." The description mentions Clymer's "fondness for titles, for self-appointed and self-devised positions of 'eminent authority.'"[18]

Clymer retaliated by saying that Lewis' own claim to the designation of "Dr." was suspect.[19] This counterblast of Clymer's came in the vast second volume of his book, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America.* The 959 pages of this volume are devoted almost exclusively to attacking Lewis and AMORC. Like many of Clymer's writings, the work has to be approached with skepticism.

It has always been characteristic of Rosicrucian organizations to go to great trouble to try and prove their authority and prevent rivals from laying claim to the Rosicrucian banner. According to Clymer's account in the work just mentioned, Lewis began by claiming authority from the French Rosicrucians. He then decided that it would be desirable to obtain a German lineage. To do this, Clymer claims, Lewis allied himself, around 1930, with a German occultist called Heinrich Tränker (1880–1956), who had declared himself successor to Theodor Reuss (who had died in 1924) as head of the O.T.O. Tränker, calling himself "Recnartus," had formed a group called the Societas Pansophia. Lewis and Tränker then formed the International Headquarters of the Supreme Council of AMORC at Berlin, and Lewis began to issue proclamations of his connections with the German Rosicrucians. Part of the plan involved the issuing of a *New Fama,* claiming to emanate from the true Rosicrucian authority and stating that "Hitherto the ANCIENT MYSTIC ORDER ROSAE CRUCIS (AMORC) following ancient traditions, worked more or

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[18] AMORC, *Rosicrucian Manual*, p. 10.

[19] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*, Vol. 2 (Quakertown, PA: The Rosicrucian Foundation, 1935), p. 408.

less secretly for centuries to improve the destinies of mankind. . . . For some years, however, the August Adepts have been inclined to work more openly and visibly."[20]

According to Clymer, Lewis and his associates found some difficulty in maintaining the credibility of this German connection and, by the beginning of 1933, were laying plans for a new European source of authority called FUDOSI.[21] These initials stood for Federatio Universalis Dirigens Ordines Societatesque Initiationis or Fédération Universelle des Ordres et Sociétés Initiatiques. This body took shape out of contacts between Lewis and a number of European esotericists. One of these was a Belgian lawyer called Jean Mallinger, a promoter of fringe Masonic rites, including a co-Masonic version of the Order of Memphis and Mizraim, which aroused the ire of Chevillon who headed the French Memphis and Mizraim. In Belgium, Lewis also made contact with Emile Dantinne, alias Sar Hiéronymus, who had taken over the leadership of Péladan's order after the latter's death in 1918. Dantinne, Mallinger, and a number of other European esotericists collaborated with Lewis in establishing FUDOSI, which was launched in Brussels in 1934 and gave its support to AMORC's claim to be the only legitimate Rosicrucian movement in North and South America. FUDOSI promoted the idea of Ancient Egypt as the true source of Rosicrucianism, an idea that is much emphasized in AMORC.

Lewis and Clymer both attempted at various times to seek European authority—Lewis with his FUDOSI and Clymer with his similarly-named Federation Universelle des Ordres, Sociétés et Fraternités des Initiés which in 1939, according to Clymer, held a meeting at the Hotel George V in Paris at which Clymer was made an honorary member of the Qabalistic and Gnostic Rose Cross. Later, Clymer recounts, in his *Book of Rosicruciae*, how he set off on a series of foreign tours during which he gathered the allegiance of all the main representatives of the Rosicrucian tradition throughout the world.

One of the bones of contention between Lewis and Clymer had to do with sex magic, with each side accusing the other of teaching vicious sexual practices. Clymer admits that "the mystery of sex is the hidden and little-understood principle underlying nature" and that "the Randolph Foundation of the authentic Rosicrucian Fraternity . . . does teach the high law of generation and regeneration—the sex doctrines of the White Brotherhood." This, he emphasizes, is a healthy form of sex teaching. But Clymer waxes apoplectic when describing what he calls "the Black Magic-Sex Teachings of Crowley and the modernized O.T.O."[22]

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[20] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America,* Vol. 2, p. 375.
[21] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America,* Vol. 2, pp. 383–384.
[22] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America,* Vol. 2, pp. 562–563.

Lewis did, indeed, possess an O.T.O. charter, but one that he had received directly from Theodor Reuss when he was the then head of the O.T.O. in Germany. In 1912, Crowley had been given a charter by Reuss to operate the O.T.O. in Britain. AMORC stated that the real O.T.O. had nothing to do with black magic. It also went out of its way, in *Audi Alteram Partem*, to disavow any connection with Crowley. In fact, one of the few points of agreement between Clymer and Lewis seems to have been that Crowley was a black magician. Clymer, like most of Crowley's detractors, completely misinterprets Crowley's teachings and talks about his "notorious Black Magic-Sex formula, 'Love Is the Law, Love Under Will.'"[23]

AMORC was similarly hostile to Crowley, but this did not prevent them from using a formula very similar to his "Do What Thou Wilt Shall be the Whole of the Law." In one of the AMORC "temple lectures" for the Eleventh Grade, this passage appears:

> This leads me to a point where I may safely and confidentially comment on one of the ancient Rosicrucian laws which we have refrained from using in any of the lower grades because it is so apt to be misunderstood. That law is this: "Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law; love is the law, love under will." The first part of that law is the most significant. . . . Now that does not mean that you can do as you please and that there is no other law except the law that you go through life doing anything and everything that you desire to do. . . . The key to the whole law lies in the word "will." To do the things you will to do means to do the things that you have reasoned upon, examined, analyzed, and finally agreed upon, with the understanding that you will assume all the responsibility for your act, and bear all of the Karma that results therefrom.[24]

Viewed in its entirety, this teaching is innocuous. But if the first part is taken out of context, it can easily be misconstrued as an invitation to sexual license. As for the O.T.O., it did make use of the Rose Cross symbol and had within its structure a grade of "Esoteric Rosicrucian." It also practiced sexual magic, but in a responsible way and with serious purpose.

Unfortunately, in the exchanges between Clymer and Lewis, no really profound issues were ever touched upon, and their statements rarely rise above the level of mud-slinging. At the end of *Audi Alteram Partem*, Lewis published an open letter to Clymer challeng-

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[23] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*, Vol. 2, p. 564.
[24] R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America*, Vol. 2, p. 638.

ing him to come forward and engage in a public debate. Part of the letter reads as follows:

> *Dear Mr. Clymer,*
>
> *As you have openly declared yourself desirous of presenting to all interested parties the evidence you claim to have, which would disprove all AMORC claims, we are again, and for the last time, going to test the sincerity of your vaunted statements by challenging you to an open public debate and presentation of evidence.*

Lewis went on to offer to "pay for the rental of any hall you select in any city of one hundred thousand or more, in the mid-western states . . . and pay for your transportation to the city."[25]

It is a pity that this debate never took place, as it would undoubtedly have produced some spectacular fireworks. Clymer refused Lewis' invitation and demanded in turn that Lewis submit to investigation all the documents he possessed. This Lewis was understandably unwilling to do, as some of them would have been embarrassing to him, to say the least. The two continued to dispute about their respective rights to the term "Rosicrucian" and, finally, Clymer succeeded in obtaining permission from the State of Pennsylvania to register under a Rosicrucian heading. The whole feud has echoes of the battle between Péladan and de Guaita. Plus ça change . . .

Today, AMORC is a vast organization with a worldwide membership. Its headquarters, Rosicrucian Park, at San Jose, California, covers an entire city block and consists of a series of impressive buildings abounding in Egyptian porticoes, domes, and statues of sphinxes. They include an Egyptological museum, science laboratories, lecture halls, and a temple. Inquirers to the order initially receive a lavishly printed booklet titled *Mastery of Life* which invites the reader to develop his or her hidden powers by following the Rosicrucian course of study. The subjects include: "Care of the Body, Intuition and Judgement, Using Mental Powers at Will, the Mysteries of Time and Space, Man's Five Senses, the Human Consciousness, Drawing on Inner Forces, Inquiry into the Nature of the Soul, Mystical Laws and Principles."[26]

Leaving aside the controversies about Lewis, it has to be recognized that he was, in his way, a remarkable and talented individual, and the creation of AMORC was a considerable achievement. The organization has had an enormous impact, partly through its skillful salesmanship and partly also through the way in which it combines many different esoteric strands within an appealing sys-

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[25] H. Spencer Lewis, *Audi Alteram Partem* (San Jose, CA: AMORC, n.d.).
[26] AMORC, *Mastery of Life* (San Jose, CA: AMORC, n.d.).

tem of symbolism and ritual. AMORC must have drawn many people into occultism and mysticism who might otherwise never have become involved. AMORC's influence can be traced into many other organizations which are either off-shoots or part of the same stream. These include Scientology, the Mayan Order, Astara, and Silva Mind Control. As Robert Ellwood writes, in his *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*: "The similarity of the structure, ritual, and some of the terminology to Freemasonry has no doubt aided its acceptance in America, where Masonry is very 'establishment.' The insistence that AMORC is not a religion has unquestionably helped many who would feel reluctant to reject their traditional church to accept the Order's teaching and membership—and the alternative reality tradition. In part, for this reason, AMORC has played a special role in shaping the culture of modern America."[27]

In a quieter and smaller way Clymer's and Heindel's Rosicrucian groups are still active. After Clymer's death the organization was taken over by his son, Emerson M. Clymer. According to a correspondent of mine who is a keen member of the group, the inner teachings are very strictly withheld from all but suitably qualified members. The headquarters are at Beverly Hall, situated in attractive and peaceful farm country near Quakertown, Pennsylvania. The premises include a chiropractic institute and a clinic specializing in natural treatment.

Heindel's Rosicrucian Fellowship has its headquarters at Oceanside, California, between Los Angeles and San Diego. This includes guest houses and a striking twelve-sided white temple with a commanding view of the surrounding country. The twelve sides, corresponding to the number of signs of the zodiac, reflect the astrological emphasis of the Rosicrucian Fellowship. It includes a publishing section issuing Max Heindel's numerous books on astrology, Rosicrucianism, and similar subjects. Unlike AMORC, this group has a religious character. To quote Ellwood: "The few Rosicrucian Fellowship churches have something of an old-fashioned Protestant atmosphere. Over the altar hang curtains, opened only when worship begins, unveiling a rose-covered cross. The service will have the usual hymns and scripture, but the prayer will be more in the New Thought style of sending out 'good vibrations' than of intercession. There is generally no minister; members conduct the service themselves. At times there are lecturers from Oceanside. It appears that the group is attracting fewer young persons at the present time."[28]

Rosicrucianism is now very widespread in other countries. Apart from AMORC, which has a world-wide membership with

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[27] Robert S. Ellwood, *Religions and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), p. 112.

[28] Robert S. Ellwood, *Religions and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, pp. 111–112.

branches in most countries, there are many other Rosicrucian groups at work all over the world. One of the most active and interesting of the European groups is the Lectorium Rosicrucianum of Haarlem, Holland, which began in 1924 and has branches in many countries, including Britain, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand. To quote from its "Declaration":

> The religious community of the *Lectorium Rosicrucianum* aims at the restoration and the revitalization of the original *threefold temple of God*, which existed in human prehistory and which manifested itself to all of humanity and aimed to serve it.
>
> The threefold temple brought to humanity the original royal and priestly *Religion*, the original *Science* and the original *Art of Construction*. . . .
>
> The Lectorium Rosicrucianum . . . brings to humanity, *firstly*, a community of seeking souls who want to orient themselves to the original Universal Doctrine. . . .
>
> Behind this community of the forecourt, there is *secondly*, the Mystery School of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, in which all those are accepted who make the decision to actually walk the path of liberation from the wheel of birth and death. . . .
>
> *Thirdly*, behind the Mystery School there is the Community of the Inner Degrees, the Universal Chain of all preceding Gnostic Brotherhoods which accepts all pilgrims to the liberating life and welcomes them into the realms of immortality and resurrection . . .

The Lectorium Rosicrucianum has its own publishing section, issuing a range of well-printed books on Rosicrucian subjects in Dutch and English. It also issues a quarterly magazine called *The Topstone*.

It is also worth mentioning a Rosicrucian order founded by Annie Besant in 1912 as an offshoot of her Mixed Freemasonry movement. Known as the Order of the Temple of the Rose Cross, this movement evidently collapsed in 1918. One of Mrs. Besant's followers, however, later went into partnership with a man calling himself "Aurelius." They formed what they called the Corona Fellowship of Rosicrucians, which ran a "Rosicrucian theater" at Christchurch in Hampshire. Gerald Gardner became a member of this group during the Second World War and, through it, was led to witchcraft, (he became a famous practitioner).[29]

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[29] Details are given in J. L. Bracelin, *Gerald Gardner: Witch* (London: Octagon Press, 1960).

Another important name in the recent history of Rosicrucianism is that of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the founder of Anthroposophy, which he saw as incorporating the Rosicrucian stream. Steiner's view of the historical mission and significance of Rosicrucianism is expressed in a lecture that he gave to the German branch of the Theosophical Society in 1907—that is, six years before the foundation of the Anthroposophical Society.[30] Somewhat surprisingly, Steiner sees Christian Rosenkreuz, not as a mere symbol, but as a real historical figure, "a high spiritual individual embodied in a human personality," who brought a new spiritual current into the world in the 15th century and continues, on a higher plane, to carry this current forward, appearing periodically in other incarnations. According to Steiner, the Rosicrucian current went temporarily underground during most of the 19th century, but recently re-emerged. "Only now, in our own time," Steiner says "has it become possible again to make the Rosicrucian wisdom accessible and allow it to flow into general culture. And if we think about this culture we shall discover the reason why this had to be."[31] Steiner was referring here to what he saw as the plunge of modern society into materialism.

What Rosicrucianism provides, as Steiner perceives it, is essentially a new method of processing ancient wisdom in a way that is suitable for the modern age. Rosicrucianism uses the rational intellect to grasp truths transmitted through higher spiritual faculties; it engages actively in the practical world. "Rosicrucian wisdom must not stream only into the head, nor only into the heart, but also into the hand, into our manual capacities, into our daily actions."[32] Here he is describing in essence what Anthroposophy itself became, a movement with a spiritual foundation that at the same time reached out into many areas of life. Today it encompasses, *inter alia*, architecture, painting, the Waldorf educational movement, the dance method known as eurythmy, biodynamic agriculture, homoeopathic medicine, the psychotherapeutic "biographical" method, and a religious denomination known as the Christian Community. One could say that it is Rosicrucian in the sense that it echoes the holistic, universalist vision present in the original manifestos.

In a later lecture, Steiner said: "By way of our stream it is possible to penetrate into true Rosicrucianism, but our way must not be designated as 'Rosicrucianism' because our stream encompasses a far broader realm than that of the Rosicrucians, namely the whole of Anthroposophy."[33] Certainly, however, Anthroposophy must be

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[30] In Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers* (Dornach, Germany: Rudolf Steiner Taschenbücher, 1989), pp. 11–21; in English: *Theosophy of the Rosicrucians* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., 1953), pp. 7–17.

[31] Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucians*, p. 10.

[32] Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy of the Rosicrucians*, p. 13.

[33] Paul M. Allen, *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), p. 455.

seen as one of the most important movements to have carried forward the Rosicrucian impulse.

Besides the various organizations actually using the term Rosicrucian or claiming Rosicrucian descent, there are many people who have been influenced in a less obvious way by the mythology. They have been inspired by Rosicrucian ideals and by the concept of a secret and altruistic brotherhood. One example is John Hargrave, an idealistic man of wide-ranging gifts who, between the wars, headed an organization in Britain called the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift. Starting as a development of the Boy Scout movement, the organization's members were encouraged to engage in camping and other outdoor activities in order to re-establish contact with the Earth and counteract the unnatural and unhealthy influences of the mechanical age. It later developed into a political movement, the "Green Shirts," advocating economic reform along Social Credit lines. It petered out after the banning of uniforms in the Mosley era. It was not a fascist movement, but was based on a combination of a Ruskin-Morris type of socialism and a romantic nationalism which is reminiscent of the German nationalism of the earlier Rosicrucians. Hargrave describes this stirringly in *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift.*

> Thus, in England, The Kindred has sent roots into a cultural soil which shows most clearly the strata of Anglo-Saxon, Viking, Celt and Neolithic builders of barrow, dolmen, and the old straight track. In these traditions it finds something necessary, something clean and bright and true: something sensed by Rudyard Kipling in his *Puck of Pook's Hill.*[34]

In the same book, Hargrave quotes Robert Burton's comment in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: "We had need of some general visitor in our age that should reform what is amiss—a just army of Rosie-Cross men; for they will amend all matters (they say), religion, policy, manners, with arts, sciences, etc." Having described the emergence of the Rosicrucian legend, Hargrave goes on to say that "we in our own day are every whit as much in need of 'some general visitor,' 'a just army of Rosie-Cross men,' a body of 'undeceiving Jesuits' that shall reform what is amiss."[35]

The idea of initiation also has a place in Hargrave's thinking. In his unusual and highly entertaining novel, *Young Winkle*, he describes how a young, uneducated urchin is taken under the wing of a wise old man called Dr. Teshoon Lammas, who educates him according to his own philosophy so that he emerges a full rounded individual.

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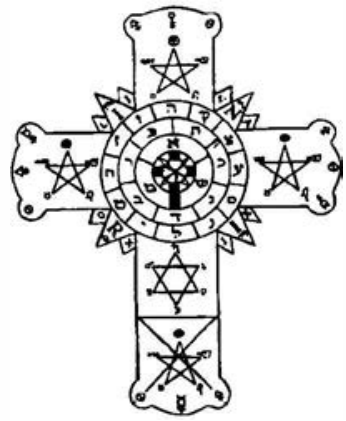
[34] John Hargrave, *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift* (London, 1927).
[35] John Hargrave, *The Confession of the Kibbo Kift.*

Dr. Lammas is a member of an international brotherhood called "The Game," whose aims are somewhat similar to those of the Kibbo Kift, whose symbol it bears. The brotherhood is devoted to improving the world through a mixture of economic reform, enlightened education, and a policy of physical fitness. Winkle, after passing a series of tests of worthiness, is finally admitted to this society in an impressive initiation ceremony, highly reminiscent of some of the ceremonies encountered earlier. Lammas is similar to the Rosicrucian adept figure encountered so often in literature.

It is clear that today there is not only one "just army of Rosie-Cross men," but many groups and individuals. Though they have not yet brought about the hoped-for reformation, they continue to work to that end. As demonstrated, they often differ widely in their attitudes and beliefs, but they all regard themselves as carrying the banner originally raised by Christian Rosenkreuz.



Chapter 13

Rosicrucianism: A Never-Ending Story

The history I have outlined in this book depicts Rosicrucianism as a phenomenon that is curiously difficult to categorize. It is not a religion, since its followers have often practiced it side by side with Christianity and other religions, regarding it as an addition rather than a substitute. It is not a cult, since that implies something too specific and ephemeral. Nor is it a philosophy, since it is too nebulous and elusive to be given that name. Another stiking characteristic of Rosicrucianism is the fact, mentioned in my introduction, that it grew out of the abrupt appearance of a deliberately created mythology.

Perhaps the intellectual/spiritual matrix it most closely resembles is Freemasonry, with which, as I have shown, it has certain connections, though the full extent of the connections remains unclear. We know that Rosicrucian elements did, in fact, become attached to Freemasonry in the 18th century and there are still connections in the form of Rose Croix Masonry (see Appendix) and the Soc. Ros. (see chapter 10). But the link may go much further back; it may have been a Rosicrucian catalyst which brought about the change from operative to speculative Masonry. Hopefully, further research will throw more light on this question.

Reducing Rosicrucianism to its basic elements leaves little more than a name, a symbol, a legend, certain occult associations, and a Gnostic type of outlook. Yet, somehow, this strange organism has succeeded in surviving and growing over a period of more than three centuries. How, and why?

One answer is that its very vagueness has helped it to survive. Rosicrucianism has frequently changed its color and shape to suit its environment, yet has still remained identifiable. Self-styled adepts have made all sorts of extravagant claims in its name without

any danger of being contradicted, since no one has ever been in a position to say of what "true" Rosicrucianism consists. The movement has never been short of disciples, for human beings love a mystery, and the Rosy Cross is a mystery *par excellence.*

Having traced the history of the Rosicrucian movement through its many manifestations to the present day it is natural to ask what lessons this history has to offer. One such lesson is the realization that a nebulous idea can be a thing of power if it is cloaked in mystery and, at the same time, presented in the form of a simple but suggestive symbolism. Another is that such an idea can lead up blind alleys as well as avenues of light. Although the movement has included many dubious characters, it has also inspired people genuinely anxious to bring about a "New Dawn." Rosicrucianism has helped to keep alive the spirit of the alchemists which underlies homoepathy and still inspires us to "read the Book of Nature" with a sense of worship. Its holistic, universalist vision is present in movements such as Anthroposophy. And it has certainly had an enriching effect on art and literature.

Another aspect of Rosicrucianism which few writers have touched upon, but which I feel is important, is its quality of playfulness, something that is arguably present in the Gnostic tradition that so influenced Rosicrucianism. The dualistic universe of the Gnostics, with its demiurge who created the physical world, need not be gloomy and depressing. Rather, it opens up the possibility of seeing the world as a marvellous conjuring trick, with the demiurge as the conjurer, whose skill is admired and applauded. But sooner or later the show will end and you must leave the theatre. From this viewpoint, Gnosticism ceases to be a negative, melancholy view and becomes instead a playful, celebratory one.

The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, in his classic book *Homo Ludens*, deals with playfulness and its importance in human culture throughout history. This is the attitude found among certain Buddhist sages who cultivate humor as one path to enlightenment. There have always been, in both the East and the West, "laughing masters" who followed this path. When I began writing of the Rosicrucians, I had not realized the importance of this element of humor and playfulness. Hence, I did not appreciate the real significance of the word *ludibrium*, or "jest", which Johann Valentin Andreae used to describe *The Chemical Wedding.* Only later did the likely meaning occur to me. Andreae did not mean a hoax or a practical joke, but rather an act of creative playfulness in the spirit of *homo ludens.* Andreae was, in a sense, a "laughing master," as were many others who have played a role in the history of Rosicrucianism.

Often the "laughing master" is difficult to distinguish from the imposter—in fact, a person can be both of these at the same time. This truth is illustrated in some of the occult novels and stories of the German writer Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932). Meyrink had a more than academic interest in the esoteric. He was a member of

the occult lodge of the Blue Star in Prague, which became affiliated with a group surrounding an elderly weaver who was supposed to have received a Rosicrucian initiation. In a short story called *Meister Leonhard* (published in 1916), Meyrink describes a quack doctor and wonder-worker called Schrepfer. It may have been more than coincidence that he chose the same name as the 18th-century Masonic propagandist of doubtful character mentioned in chapter 8.

Meyrink's Schrepfer is described as a curiously contradictory individual:

> Doctor Schrepfer ate fire, swallowed swords, turned water into wine, thrust daggers through his cheeks and tongue without drawing blood, healed possessed people, charmed away injuries, invoked spirits, bewitched men and cattle.
>
> Daily Leonhard realized that the man was a fraud who could neither read nor write and yet performed wonders . . .
>
> Everything that the trickster said and did had a double aspect: he cheated men and at the same time helped them; he lied and his speech concealed the highest truth; he spoke the truth and the lie sneered forth. He fantasized carelessly and his words came true.[1]

In this description, Meyrink conveys the paradoxical fact that occult knowledge is often transmitted through seemingly disreputable channels. A man can be at the same time a cheap charlatan and a purveyor of the greatest wisdom. In fact, it is hard to think of a great mystical teacher of recent times who did not have an element of the trickster or showman about him. This applies to such recent figures as Lévi, Crowley, and Gurdjieff. Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the history of the Rosicrucian movement.

I believe that the most fruitful way to look at Rosicrucianism is not as a specific doctrine or authority handed down through a succession of groups, but rather as the way that certain individuals have chosen to express an inner quest. Every seeker after truth must choose the symbology that accords best with his own particular search. The Grail cycle is one example of such a symbology. Rosicrucianism is another. From time to time, people who have felt themselves drawn to this symbolism have gathered together with varying degrees of formality. But the quest itself is too elusive in nature ever to yield to analysis.

These groups of seekers are like the "League" described in Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East (Die Morgenlandfahrt)*.[2] In this powerful little novel, Hesse's narrator describes his involvement

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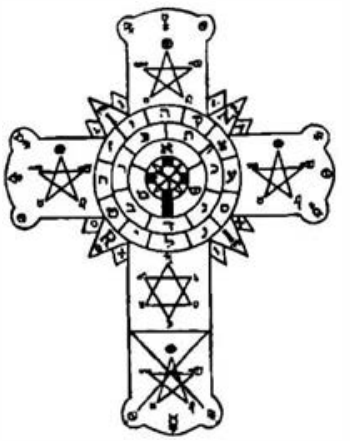
[1] Gustav Meyrink, *Meister Leonhard* (1916).

[2] Hermann Hesse, *Journey to the East* (*Die Morgenlandfahrt*), Hilda Rosner, trans. (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1988).

with a group of travelers, each bent on realizing some personal dream through his journey. Later, the narrator is given permission by the chiefs of the League to have access to all the group's secret archives so that he can write an account of the brotherhood. But as soon as he begins to look through the archives, he finds himself faced with a bewildering array of documents filling room after room, documents often written in foreign languages which he cannot understand. He soon realizes, with a sense of humiliation, that the task is beyond him and curses his own presumptuousness in thinking that such an undertaking was possible. Perhaps it is equally presumptuous to try to write a history of the Rosicrucian movement, and if I have persisted where Hesse's hero gave up, it has been in the hope of adding a crack of light to an obscure subject. There remain other veils to be removed. But that must remain the privilege of the individual seeker.



APPENDIX

THE ROSE CROIX OF HEREDOM DEGREE

The Eighteenth Degree of the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite of Freemasonry, known as the Rose Croix of Heredom, presents an interesting adaptation of Rosicrucian motifs. In its present form, it appears to date from toward the end of the 18th century, but a reader of the first edition of this book has written to me stating: "The Rose Croix is supposed to have originated in Scotland and was worked in 1750 (in England too), long before the 33 degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Rite were put together. And even earlier there was the Royal Order of Scotland with a Knight of the Rosy Cross degree." A. C. F. Jackson has provided a history of the Ancient and Accepted Rite in his book *Rose Croix*.[1]

The following details of the Eighteenth Degree are quoted from *The Text Book of Advanced Freemasonry*, published anonymously in 1873.

> This Degree is philosophical, the end of which is to free the mind from those encumbrances which hinder its progress towards perfection and to raise it to the contemplation of inimitable truth, and the knowledge of divine and spiritual object. . . .
>
> The emblems of this Degree are the Eagle and the Pelican, the Cross and the Rose. The Eagle is a symbol of Christ in his divine character. . . . The Pelican is an emblem of our Saviour shedding his blood for the salvation of human kind.

[1] A. C. F. Jackson, *Rose Croix* (Shepperton, Lewis Masonic, 1980; revised and extended edition, 1987). See McCoy Publishing in Oklahoma City, OK.

> The Cross, as with the Egyptians, is a symbol of everlasting life, but since our Saviour's time it has been adopted by all Christians as an emblem of Him who died for the redemption of the human race.
>
> The Rose is figuratively Christ, hence he is called "the Rose of Sharon." Ragon says that the Cross was in Egypt an emblem of immortality, and the rose of secrecy; the rose followed by the cross was the simplest mode of writing "the secret of immortality" . . .[2]

As in the case of other orders, the Rose Croix Knight selects a name from an approved list of characteristics, becoming, for example, "Eques ab Honestate" (Knight of Honesty), "Eques a Sinceritate" (Sincerity), or "Eques a Hilaritate" (Joyousness).

The book goes on to describe the arrangement of the chamber for the Rose Croix degree as follows:

> This Degree requires Three Chambers, and, if possible, an Outer or Preparation Room for the reception of Candidates, where the preceding Degrees, to the 17th inclusive, are to be given by name, unless the same is done in extenso. The next is named "the Black Room," this should be hung with black, the floor covered with an oil cloth representing a Mosaic pavement in black and white squares or lozenges, in the East two Black curtains arranged so as to be drawn asunder entirely, and sufficiently open to show the Altar, which should be raised, and on it three steps covered with black with a white border, on which silver or white Swords are worked. Behind and above the upper step a Transparency, on which appears three Crosses, in the Centre or Highest Cross should be the Mystic Rose (Black), placed in the centre of the Cross, and surrounded by a Crown of Thorns, the other two Crosses should have a Skull and Crossbones at the feet. Behind the Curtains and at the foot of the Altar should be a Triangular Table, covered with black cloth, and white fringe around the edge, on which must be placed Three Waxlights, a Bible, Compasses, and Triangle. Beside the Altar there should be a Couch for the M. W. S. to recline on. On the Altar, before the Transparency, at the foot of the Cross, there should be placed a Rose made of Black Crape. In the centre of the room must be the Tracing Board, and on the floor a painting of seven circles in white upon a black ground, and in the centre a Rose. In the North, South, and

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[2] Anonymous, *Textbook of Advanced Freemasonry* (London: n.p., 1873).

West there must be Three Pillars, six feet high, in the Capitals of which must be inscribed "Faith, Hope, and Charity," or rather their initials "F.H.C.," painted on small tins or cards, and suspended by a Hook to each Pillar. Each Column must be surmounted by Eleven Lights, disposed in a box having eleven holes, and the letters "F.H.C." respectively in the centre. If the Black Room be sufficiently large it may be divided into two by a second black curtain behind the Altar, at all events there must be a passage thence to the Red Room, according to the position of the Apartments. From the Black Room should open the Chamber of Death, and thence the Red Room, but if this cannot be managed, the Candidate, after having been refused admission in the second part of the Ceremony, must be sent into the Reception Room, and the Black Room transformed into the Chamber of Death. The Chamber of Death must have the emblems of mortality strewed about, and sundry obstacles so placed that the Candidate may have some difficulty in groping his way to the Black Curtain, behind which a Lamp of Spirits of Wine and Salt must be placed, and the Wick of the Lamp also strewed with Salt, and two or three persons in winding sheets grouped around it as Corpses; the Chamber of Death may be lighted by Transparencies, representing Skulls, Crossbones, &c., or by seven flambeaux fixed in Skulls and Crossbones. The Third or Red Room must be brilliantly illuminated, and all the Brethren in their highest costumes ranged under their Banners, the room hung with red; in the centre the Tracing Board, the representation of the Mysterious Ladder of Seven Steps; on the Altar must be Seven Steps and Thirty-three Lights, behind a Transparency, representing the Blazing star of Seven Points; in the centre the letter G. On the top step of the Altar must be the Cubic Stone, in front of which a Red Rose opened, with the letter G in the centre. The Altar must be profusely decorated with Roses, and perfumed with Attar of Roses. No Cross should appear in this part of the Degree, but the WORD, when found, can be suspended to a Silk Thread, stretched across by small hooks behind each letter and about the cubic stone, whence they can easily be removed previously to the WORD being burnt. The last part of the Ceremony is given in the Red Room, arranged as above, except that the Ladder is to be removed, and a pedestal covered with a white cloth placed at the East end of the Tracing Board, on which are placed a Salver of Biscuits or Passion Cakes, a Cup on each side, one containing Strontian, in which to burn the WORD, and a Salt Cellar

> with Salt. In conferring the Degree of Rose Croix the Degrees are given by name from the Fourth to the Fourteenth inclusive in a Grand Lodge of Perfection. A Grand Lodge of Princes of Jerusalem is then declared open, and the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Degrees are conferred by name; the Grand Lodge of Princes of Jerusalem is then closed, and a General Lodge of the Knights of the East and West is opened, the Degree is given by name, with the Signs, Tokens, and Words. The Grand Lodge of the Knights of the East and West is then closed, and the Eighteenth or Rose Croix Degree is then conferred in extenso; the great length of time necessary is sufficient excuse for not giving the others in that manner."[3]

The ceremony itself is too long and involved to quote in full. Briefly, it involves the candidate petitioning the presiding officer, the "Most Wise Sovereign," for admission and being told that he must first find the "lost word." In a symbolic search for the word, he passes through the Black Room, where he undergoes symbolic dangers and afflictions, designed to fortify his virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. On emerging, he is questioned again by the Most Wise Sovereign and given the letters of the lost word. These letters are then placed on the altar, and the candidate is admitted to the Rose Croix degree.

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[3] Anonymous, *Textbook of Advanced Freemasonry*.

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Christopher McIntosh was born in England and studied at the universities of London and Oxford, earning a doctorate in history. He has written many books on the history of Western esotericism, including *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*, and a biography, *Ludwig II of Bavaria: The Swan King* (third edition, New York: Barnes & Noble; London: I. B. Tauris, 1997). He has lived in Britain and the United States, and now resides in Hamburg, Germany, where he works for an institute of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).